

JOHN MEYENDORFF

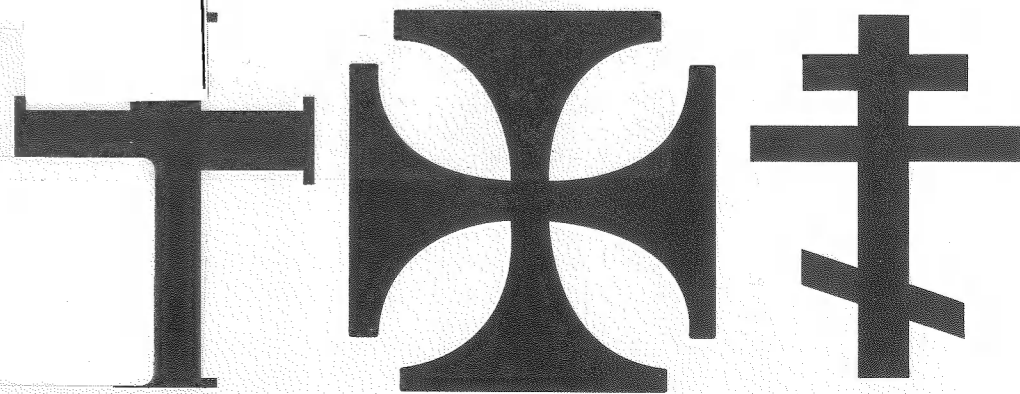
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ROME  
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Historical and Theological Studies

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# ROME CONSTANTINOPLE MOSCOW

*Historical and Theological  
Studies*

by  
JOHN MEYENDORFF

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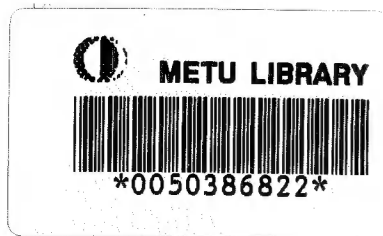
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## Introduction

Gathered in the present volume are studies on various historical and theological issues which have arisen between East and West over the centuries. The first and fourth studies are original. The others have appeared in various publications. They discuss different aspects of the estrangement between the two halves of the Christian world, and present an evaluation of several attempts at healing the schism. The problems related to the fall of Byzantium and the rise of Russia as a major center of Orthodox mission and thought are also discussed.

Our century, the twentieth, which is now ending, has also seen perhaps the most significant attempt ever at ecclesiological rapprochement: the decrees of the council of Vatican II. The council was partially a follow-up of a "return to [patristic] sources" and of a "liturgical movement" which, within European—primarily French and German—Roman Catholicism had restored the prestige and challenge of Eastern Christian theology in the post-World War II years. The council documents, without solving all the problems, reaffirmed an ecclesiology based on the local eucharistic community; a theology of the episcopate, focused on conciliarity; a conception of the laity as the "people of God." All these were common ground for a dialogue with the Orthodox Church. But the council also attempted to speak to the "modern" world, in what Pope John XXIII called the *aggiornamento*. Some of its statements were interpreted as assuming the premises of secularism. This interpretation unleashed latent forces, which had earlier been condemned as "modernism." In many Western countries, these forces were very strong and matched similar secularistic trends in Protestantism. The rapprochement with Orthodoxy—which undoubtedly was among the basic conciliar motivations—was swamped by a kind of new triumphalism of "modernity," through which the Church tended to lose its identity. This, in turn, led to a significant weakening of world Roman Catholicism,

particularly in the industrialized Western societies of Europe and America.

As these dramatic processes were developing, the Orthodox Church appeared remote and irrelevant to most Western Christians. Its theological witness was too weak to be heard. Only some specialists were aware of the Orthodox alternative to Western trends. This absence of Orthodoxy was, in fact, as tragic as in the time of the sixteenth-century Reformation, when its presence would have helped to transcend the dichotomy between Rome and Protestantism. In those days, the Orthodox East was shielded from the West by the Turkish occupation of the Balkans and the Middle East. In our own twentieth century, the "iron curtain" played a similar role. The Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe, and more particularly the Church of Russia, saw their intellectual and spiritual centers suppressed; their spiritual élites physically decimated; their theology stifled by the absence of publications and criticism. The thousands and thousands of true martyrs of the faith had witnessed to the strength of Christianity, but how many, in the prosperous West, were paying attention to their message? Following Vatican II, there remained, of course, a significant relationship—consciously and diplomatically cultivated—between the see of Rome and the ecumenical patriarchate of Constantinople. This included spectacular gestures, such as the "lifting of the anathemas" in 1965. Mutual visits emphasized the ecumenically important fact that Rome was acknowledging the existence of a sort of "twin center" outside of its own communion... But the implications were not discussed in depth.

Under Pope John Paul II, Roman Catholicism is actively reestablishing the power structures and disciplines which tended to be relaxed under the two preceding popes. This is being done slowly but surely in the name of the well-known principle of "Petrine" authority. The future will show whether the Roman Church will fully recover the monolithism which existed before Vatican II, or whether such a full restoration will prove to be impossible. Meanwhile, the ecclesiological contrasts between East and West remain quite vivid.

Suddenly and quite unexpectedly, a totally new situation arose with the fall of the Communist empire. Religious freedom, following seven decades of persecution in vast areas where the Orthodox Church was dominant for centuries, represents the most spectacular moral and spiritual victory of the faith since the legalization of Christianity by the Roman empire in the

fourth century. Large Roman Catholic and Protestant communities are also beneficiaries of the new freedoms.

It would appear, therefore, that now is the time when all Christians could cooperate, to the measure to which their differences allow them to, in a single task of mission and evangelization. And yet, what one sees is a new and bitter confrontation between Rome and Orthodoxy in forms which have not changed at all since the seventeenth century.

Both sides have clearly been at fault in the past, but the often brutal struggle for each church building, or each piece of property, taking place today, raising Christian against Christian, is truly demonic—not only because it puts the Christian faith to shame before the unbelievers, but also because it has no real spiritual or theological content. Just as in the confrontation between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Serbs and Croats in Yugoslavia, religion serves as a cover for nationalistic and political ideologies.

In spite of the collapse of ecumenical *dreams* which these events illustrate, it is the duty of theologians to remain ecumenical in their *theology*, paving the way for the time when real issues can again be discussed *sine irae*. Fortunately we, in the West, have ample opportunity for such dispassionate and serious theological work.

In order to make a dialogue possible, our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters must acknowledge that the Orthodox represent a true historical and theological challenge which is relevant *not only* to the preservation of "Eastern" ritual and folklore, but to the proper understanding of the Christian faith everywhere. The Orthodox, on the other hand, must transcend their defensiveness, created by age-old suspicions and many negative historical experiences with Roman Catholic authoritarianism, and adopt a truly "catholic" attitude in maintaining what they see as the Truth. This "catholicity" implies love, mission, witness in the West, and the acceptance of all things which are truly authentic and good in Western Christianity. They should acknowledge that the Roman Catholic Church, in spite of its highly regrettable "imperialistic" impulses, created by the very system which governs it (and which we Orthodox reject), is nevertheless the most powerful body promoting Christianity in the world today.

All this makes honest and serious dialogue theologically and morally imperative. It must be based not on relativism, but on mutual respect and

authentic information. Christian unity may not be achieved before the Last Day, but Christian eschatology cannot justify indifference or passivity. It implies judgment for those who do not seek unity in truth, for which the Lord prayed before His passion.

The dialogue, on the other hand, cannot be reduced to a debate on individual, dogmatic "differences": the filioque, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and the like, or the papal primacy. These fundamental differences can only be resolved if there is a common understanding of what makes one a Christian, of the doctrine of salvation. In some of the studies published below, there is an attempt to discuss such problems, as they were developed in the Eastern tradition, passing from Byzantium to Russia, including modern theological trends. What is remarkable is that at no time within the Orthodox Church did theologians fully lose sight of the Christian West. In the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, a phenomenon labeled by Fr. Florovsky as the "Western captivity" of the Orthodox mind reflected the loss, by most Orthodox theologians, of their own traditional patristic roots. More often than not, they reduced their theologizing to a feeble participation in Western debates, which opposed Reformation and Counter-Reformation. This period of theological decadence was largely due to historical circumstances, which left the Orthodox East without schools, without literature, and without tools of independent thought. The faith was preserved by strict adherence to liturgical practice, to learning from hymnography and the traditions of monastic piety and spirituality. However, when a theological revival occurred in modern times, Orthodox theologians, liberated from mechanical dependence upon the West, continued nevertheless to theologize with general awareness of Western Christendom: they never really withdrew from the dialogue. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said of the West, whose very success and self-sufficiency did not always leave an opportunity for "memory" of the Eastern roots of the Christian faith. The Eastern fathers were (and still are) published, translated and studied by specialists, but are rarely taken into account by the great creative minds of Western Christendom.

So, the dialogue between East and West should be pursued on all levels of theological discourse, in an integrated and "holistic" fashion. Its ultimate results are in the hands of God, who, nevertheless, calls us to a free effort at achieving His will of Christian unity.

I wish to add also that the categories of "East" and "West" today refer only to the historical bifurcation which occurred in the Middle Ages. They now have little geographic and cultural significance. As I pointed out earlier, Russia, especially since the eighteenth century, has become a part of Europe, and theological developments which took place on its soil were the work of people fully aware of Western methodological categories. On the other hand, the study of Eastern fathers was fruitfully pursued in the West, and Orthodox schools and communities are now an integral part of the Christian society in both Europe and America.

What is really at stake, therefore, is not the preservation of cultural categories shaped in the distant past, but the true "catholicity" of the Christian message for the world of today.

## Rome and Constantinople

All historians agree today that the schism which eventually became a permanent form of separation between Eastern and Western Christians did not occur suddenly. It was the result of a progressive “estrangement” (the English term used by the French theologian Yves Congar), and cannot even be dated. The churches of Rome and Constantinople were often separated for long periods of time already between the fourth and the ninth centuries. Those early conflicts were sometimes caused by heresies, held in the capital of the Eastern empire (Arianism, 335-381; Monotheletism, 533-680; Iconoclasm, 723-787; 815-842) and rightfully rejected by Rome. Sometimes, Rome and Constantinople differed in their attitude in the field of ecclesiastical *oikonomia* (the “Neo-Nicaean” position, inherited from the Cappadocian Fathers, 381-*ca.* 400; the attitude to be adopted towards the *Henotikon*, also referred to as the “Acacian schism,” 482-518), and communication was broken on those grounds. Whatever the issue and whoever was at fault, it is clear that, underneath the debate on a concrete theological or disciplinary problem, there was a developing difference on the respective authority of the “apostolic see” of Rome on the one side, and on the other, the idea of a conciliar consensus prevailing in the East.

### *Imperial Structures vs. “Apostolicity”*

The system of a “pentarchy” of patriarchs, which was accepted *de facto* in the East in the fifth century, before being formally enshrined in legal and canonical texts in the sixth and seventh centuries, was based on an interpretation of the famous *canon 6* of the Council of Nicaea (325). Invoking “ancient customs” (ἀρχαῖα ἔθη), that canon granted “prerogatives” (πρεσδεῖα) to the churches of Alexandria and Antioch, invoking Rome as a precedent and model (ἐπειδὴ καὶ τῷ ἐν Ῥώμῃ ἐπισκόπῳ

τοῦτο συνθηκὴς ἐστίν).<sup>1</sup> In the East, the “prerogatives” of those three churches were understood as an acknowledgement of the social, economic and political importance of the three cities. When Constantinople was made into a “New Rome” it was, therefore, quite natural to acknowledge its new importance also. So in 381 it was decided that “the bishop of Constantinople must have prerogatives of honor (τὰ πρεσβεῖα τῆς τιμῆς) after the bishop of Rome, because that city is a New Rome.”<sup>2</sup> In 451, the council of Chalcedon sanctioned the decision by expressing, even more clearly, the prevailing Eastern view that “the *Fathers* rightly *granted* privileges to the throne of old Rome” (i.e., that those privileges did not go back to apostolic times). It also transformed the previously only honorary prerogative of Constantinople into canonical powers, within a clearly-defined territory—the imperial dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace—justifying the new “patriarchal” rights of the capital’s archbishop by the fact that “the city (of Constantinople) is honored with the presence of the emperor and the Senate,” as Rome is.<sup>3</sup> The political or simply socially pragmatic motivation for the elevation of Constantinople was therefore clear. In the eyes of the Easterners, it in no way contradicted canon 6 of Nicaea, which was also interpreted pragmatically. It was seen as quite natural that the “New Rome” would have equal privileges with the “old,” thus joining the group of “privileged” sees, which soon assumed the title of “patriarchs,” and which were joined by Jerusalem, the great center of pilgrimages.

But in Rome, there was another logic. The so-called *Decretum Gelasianum*,<sup>4</sup> a composite document of obscure origin which reflected the view prevailing in papal circles, proclaimed: “The holy Roman church was placed at the head of the other churches not by some council, but it

1 G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* II (Athens, 1852) p. 128 (later quoted as RP).

2 RP II, 173.

3 RP II, 280-1.

4 Text in E. Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum*. Texte u. Untersuchungen, 38, 3 (Leipzig, 1912). The text of the *Decretum* is a composite one, and there is a problem of dating. Connected with pope Gelasius (492-6) in some manuscripts, it is seen by some scholars as contemporary of pope Hormisdas (514-523) (P. Battifol, *Le Siège apostolique* [Paris, 1924], pp. 146-50; F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* [Washington, DC, 1958], pp. 56-88). However, a broader consensus (Turner, Chapman, Caspar, Kidd) holds the view that the kernel of the document, if not the full text, goes back to pope Damasus (366-84), and reflects the latter’s position against the council of 381, which gave support, against Rome’s and Alexandria’s wishes, to the “Neo-Niceans” and issued its canon 3, proclaiming Constantinople to be the New Rome.

received primacy through the words of our Lord and Savior: “*You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church...*” The *Decretum* also gives its own interpretation to canon 6 of Nicaea: the three churches, whose “privileges” are recognized by the canon—Alexandria, Rome and Antioch—are all Petrine sees: Peter died in Rome, but he also preached in Antioch and his disciple, St Mark, founded the church of Alexandria. This interpretation will be upheld in Rome for centuries, by St Leo the Great (440-461), as well as by the great popes of the Middle Ages, in spite of its artificiality. Is Alexandria’s founding by a *disciple* of Peter sufficient to explain its “privileges” above those of Antioch? Is the *death* of Peter in Rome an ecclesiologically more important factor than the death of Jesus Himself at Jerusalem?

Be it as it may, the two different interpretations of canon 6 of Nicaea are pointing to the very issue between Rome and Constantinople, the West and the East, the issue which eventually would lead to the schism. Among historians, Fr. Dvornik defined most clearly the distinction between the “apostolic” principle used to justify not only the powers of Rome but also that of other churches, and the principle of “accommodation,” universally accepted in the East, which affirms that “privileges” of churches are based on historical realities, not apostolic foundation. Some churches may invoke “ancient customs” in favor of concrete rights, but such claims need to be formally sanctioned by councils.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, churches, historically founded by apostles, could be found everywhere in the East (Ephesus, Thessalonica and many others, not to mention Jerusalem), but apostolic foundation alone was never sufficient to justify primacy. There is no doubt that both Alexandria and Constantinople became powerful patriarchal centers not on the basis of “apostolicity,” but because of their *de facto* social, cultural and political influence.<sup>6</sup>

The existence of these two mutually opposed ecclesiological principles, however, did not prevent communion and ecclesial unity to be maintained between the East and the West for many centuries. There is no doubt that in Rome the conviction that the Petrine foundation is the real and decisive basis for Roman authority is very ancient. The moral and

5 Cf. particularly F. Dvornik’s *Byzantium and Roman Primacy* (New York, 1966).

6 The legend of a visit of St Andrew to Byzantium is found in late apocryphal documents (cf. F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity*, pp. 181-222).



doctrinal prestige of the Roman church, as the witness of an apostolic tradition going back to the apostles Peter and Paul, appears in St Irenaeus in the second century.<sup>7</sup> Such mentions in early documents take the form of a consistent claim by the Roman bishops of the fourth and fifth centuries. The most explicit claims are voiced by St Leo the Great. For Leo, St Peter, whom the Lord “made prince of the whole church,”<sup>8</sup> has a successor, the bishop of Rome, who occupies “the seat of Peter.”<sup>9</sup> His reaction to the adoption of canon 28 at Chalcedon shows that the pope understood the point of view of those who claimed that the Roman primacy—as the new primacy of Constantinople—was connected with the presence of the emperor, and he deliberately rejected that view. Indeed, by his time, the Western imperial residence had moved to Ravenna; the emperors had abandoned the old capital. However, according to St Leo, “blessed Peter, in retaining the rock-like strength which he received, does not abandon the government of the church committed to him.”<sup>10</sup> Characteristically, St Leo, in describing the pope’s role, uses the term *principatus*—a title generally reserved for emperors (since Peter, too, for him, is *princeps*, “prince”)—instead of the older and accepted term *primatus* used to designate ecclesiastical primacies.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, Leo does not think seriously about assuming imperial power, and would have been greatly astonished if he knew what use would be made of his words in later centuries to justify papal authority. He only started a process through which gradually the person and prestige of the Roman bishop would assume “imperial” dimensions. Indeed, in the Christian West, invaded and settled by barbarians, the empire would continue to exist in name only until 476, and the authority of the legitimate heirs of the caesars, now residing in Constantinople, would never be anything but symbolic. The popes filled this political and cultural void.

The contradiction which existed between East and West concerning the primacy of the two Romes, and which appears so obviously when one compares the texts of the *Decretum Gelasianum* on the one hand, and the canons 3 of Constantinople I and 28 of Chalcedon on the other, is

7 *Adv. haer.* III, ed. F. Sagnard (Paris 1952) (*Sources chrétiennes* 34), pp. 102-106.

8 *Quem totius ecclesiae principem fecit* (Sermon 4, 4, PL 54, col. 152A).

9 *Petri sedem* (Sermon 2, 2, PL 54, col. 144A).

10 Sermon 3, 3, PL 54, col. 144A.

11 On this point, see my discussion of the problem in *The Church in History. Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions* (Crestwood, NY, 1989), pp. 150-1.

therefore quite considerable. This simmering conflict was always in the background of the numerous particular conflicts between Constantinople and Rome, particularly the “Acacian schism.” How was open conflict avoided? It seems that it was through a combination, on both sides, of political realism, deliberate ideological moderation, and also of some misunderstanding.

Political realism was clearly present in the mind of pope Leo. He knew and fully acknowledged the “imperial” power of Constantinople. In a sermon, which repeated the vision of Eusebius of Caesarea, he could exclaim:

Divine providence fashioned the Roman Empire, the growth of which was extended to boundaries so wide that all races everywhere became next-door neighbors. For it was particularly germane to the divine scheme that many kingdoms should be bound together under a single government, and the world-wide preaching should have a swift means of access to all people, over whom the rule of a single state held sway.<sup>12</sup>

To Theodosius II, he writes that his imperial soul “is not only imperial, but priestly,”<sup>13</sup> and to Marcian he wishes “besides the imperial crown, also the priestly palm.”<sup>14</sup> It was difficult for him, therefore, to oppose the logic found in canon 28 of Chalcedon, and if he decided to protest, it was by using only those arguments which he knew would be understood in the East, and which required ideological moderation on his part. His argument referred exclusively to the *letter* of canon 6 of Nicaea: there are *three*, and not four or five, “privileged” churches, no more. “The Nicene Council,” he wrote to Anatolios of Constantinople, “has been endowed by God with so high a privilege, that ecclesiastical decisions... inconsistent with its decrees are altogether false and devoid of authority.”<sup>15</sup> Doubtlessly, Leo believed within his own mind (*in pectore*!) in his “Petrine” authority as bishop of Rome, but he also knew that the reference to Nicaea would carry much more weight in the East, so he preferred to use arguments which were likely to lead to consensus. In other words, for the sake of church unity, he adopted an attitude which was realistic, but lacked full consistency.<sup>16</sup>

12 Sermon 32, 2, PL 54, col. 423.

13 E. Schwartz, ed., *Acta conciliorum oecumenicorum*, II, 4, p. 3.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 64.

15 Letter to Anatolios of Constantinople, *ibid.*, p. 60; cf. other similar texts quoted in J. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, p. 157.

16 The “Janus” quality of the papal attitudes in the fifth century, shifting from the affirmation of Petrine authority to consensus-making and back, is well described by K. F. Morrison, *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300-1140* (Princeton, 1969), pp. 77-94. The moderation of St Leo is also recognized by authors like M. Jugie (*Le schisme Byzantin* [Paris, 1941], pp.

An equally decisive search for consensus existed in Constantinople. The desire to obtain the approval of the Roman church for doctrinal and disciplinary decisions taken by Eastern councils was genuine, not so much because of the "apostolicity" of Rome, but because the "Roman" world had to remain united. Seen as essential for the manifestation of Christian universality, the ecclesial consensus had to include Rome and the West. Thus the protests of St Leo had effect. Canon 28 did not appear in canonical listings which were published immediately after the council. It reappears only in the sixth century,<sup>17</sup> when papal protests could be overlooked as a Byzantine order was reestablished in Italy under Justinian. Even the Latin collection, known as *Prisca*, includes it.

Furthermore, the Byzantine episcopate was often ready to acknowledge the "Petrine" dignity of the Roman bishop. They were doing so for the sake of the consensus, but often misunderstanding the seriousness of the Roman claims. Indeed, for them, "apostolic" claims carried little actual weight in the cases of the innumerable "apostolic" sees of the East, and a verbal acknowledgement of the Petrine claims of Rome appeared to them as being of little real consequence. In some cases, consensus with the West was imposed upon them by the emperors. Thus, in 518, as Justin I and his nephew Justinian were reestablishing communion with Rome following the "Acacian" schism (undoubtedly in view of the forthcoming Byzantine reconquest of Italy from the Ostrogoths), the Byzantine bishops were required to sign a *libellus* promising "to follow in all things the apostolic see...in which persists the total and true strength of the Christian religion."<sup>18</sup> However, the signature given by John of Constantinople is phrased in a particular way. It helps our understanding of the relations

16-19), A. Wuyt ("Le 28<sup>e</sup> canon de Chalcédoine et le fondement du primat romain," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, 1951, III-IV, pp. 265-82), and H. Herman ("Chalkedon und die Ausgestaltung des Konstantinopolitanschen Primats" in A. Grillmeier-H. Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon II* [Würzburg, 1953], pp. 465-6). For a very objective discussion of the problem, based upon a full documentation, see A. de Halleux, "Le décret chalcédonien sur les prérogatives de la Nouvelle Rome," in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 64 (1988), pp. 288-323 (repr. in A. de Halleux, *Patrologie et écumenisme* [Louvain, 1990], pp. 520-555).

17 I.e., in the *Syntagma in fourteen titles* (cf. V. V. Beneshevich, *Kanonicheskii sbornik v XIV titulov* [St Petersburg, 1903], p. 155); on the issue see also F. Dvornik, "The see of Constantinople in the first Latin collections of canon law," *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloshkog Instituta VIII*, 1 (= *Mélanges Ostrogorsky*) (Belgrade, 1963), pp. 97-101.

18 *Collectio Avellana*, ed. O. Gunther in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 35, II (Vienna, 1898), *Epist.* 16B, pp. 520 (cf. also PL 63, col. 393).

between the two "Romes." "I declare," he wrote, "that the see of the apostle Peter and the see of this imperial city are one."<sup>19</sup> The clear implication is that there can only be one Rome and one Roman empire, and that political prestige and apostolicity are also inseparable. If one decides to consider the Roman bishop as a successor of Peter, one has to say the same of the bishop of Constantinople. In the medieval period, this logic was applied to the interpretation of the so-called *Donatio Constantini*, which would be considered as addressed not only to the Roman bishop but also to the patriarch of the "New Rome." Patriarch Michael Cerullarius particularly considered himself as a successor of the Roman pope, and the canonist Theodore Balsamon criticizes him sharply for these pretensions.<sup>20</sup>

The rise of the "New Rome" was not, therefore, necessarily interpreted as a challenge to the "old Rome's" prestige, since Constantinople was to be seen as a "twin," not a competitor.

However, it is clear that moderation and accommodation between the two interpretations of primacy—the "apostolic" claim of Rome and the imperial criterion used to justify the position of Constantinople—could not resolve the ecclesiological dilemma itself. Further development of ideas, particularly in the West, made accommodation more and more difficult.

19 *Illam sedem apostoli Petri et istius augustae civitatis unam esse definitio* (*ibid.*, *Epist.* 159, p. 608 = PL 63, col. 444A); cf. commentary on this point by P. L'Huillier in *La Collégialité épiscopale. Histoire et théologie* (Coll. *Unam Sanctam*, 52) (Paris, 1965), p. 340.

20 As is well known, the *Donatio* is a forgery of the eighth century, relating the legendary baptism of emperor Constantine by pope Sylvester, and the grants bestowed on the pope by the emperor. The grants included particularly the palace of the Lateran and some imperial privileges. The *Donatio* was aimed at creating a fictional precedent for the "Donation of Pepin," which affirmed papal ownership of the territory of the former Byzantine exarchate in Italy. The authenticity of the document was accepted in the East, particularly as a proof that Roman primacy is of imperial, not apostolic, origin. Also, patriarch Michael Cerullarius deliberately considered himself as successor of Sylvester and, therefore, as recipient of the legal rights bestowed by Constantine upon the pope. On this episode, see N. Suvorov, *Vizantiiskii papa* (Moscow, 1902), pp. 114-5, 127-30; cf. also P. J. Alexander, "The Donation of Constantine and Byzantium and its Earliest Use Against the Western Empire," *Zbornik Radova Vizantoloshkog Instituta* 8 (Belgrade, 1968), pp. 12-15. A processional cross, belonging to Cerullarius and decorated with images representing the *Donatio*, illustrates his thought on the matter (cf. R. Jenkins and E. Kitzinger, "A Cross of the Patriarch Michael Cerullarius," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 21 [1967], pp. 233-49). The long discussion of Balsamon, criticizing Cerullarius and including the Greek version of the *Donatio*, is in his commentary on the *Nomocanon VIII*, 5 (RP I [Athens, 1852], pp. 143-9).

## Development of Ecclesiological Ideas

There was one implication in the elevation of the see of Constantinople to the position of an "ecumenical" primacy, second only to Rome, which had to be admitted by all if consensus, unity and communion were to be preserved. This implication was that *any* local church was ontologically eligible to play a leadership role in Christendom, provided this role corresponded to the will of God, as expressed by the consensus of all the other churches and sanctioned by councils. Such a consensus existed in the case of Constantinople and there was no need for an apostolic origin, because, as expressed by St Cyprian of Carthage, the "episcopate is one, and therefore each bishop possesses it in fullness" (*in solidum*).<sup>21</sup>

A detailed study of the sources would be needed to ascertain fully that there was widespread agreement on the basic nature of the episcopate in the East and the West. I can only give a few references which, in my opinion present a sufficient explanation of the consensus which made unity between the East and the West possible for so long.

In the thought of St Cyprian, the *one* episcopate originated in the ministry of the apostle Peter, and therefore each bishop, within his own community, sat on the "chair of Peter" (*cathedra Petri*).<sup>22</sup> Yves Congar is therefore right in saying that "what is originated in Mt 16 is the episcopate."<sup>23</sup> The idea that Peter, who presided over the original community of

21 *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*, 5, ed. G. Hartel (Vienna, 1868) (= CSEL, 3), p. 214. On this point, see my observations in "The Council of Constantinople of 381 and the Primacy of Constantinople," in *Les Etudes théologiques de Chambésy. 2. La signification et l'actualité du II<sup>e</sup> Concile oecuménique pour le monde chrétien d'aujourd'hui* (Chambésy, 1982), pp. 399-413 (Repr. in *Catholicity and the Church* [Crestwood, 1983], pp. 121-142).

22 This meaning of Cyprian's famous passages in his *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* and his numerous letters cannot be challenged, especially since the work of M. Bévenot (cf. his Introduction and Notes to the translation of the *De unitate* in *Ancient Christian Writers* 25 [Westminster, MD, 1957]).

23 *L'ecclesiologie du haut Moyen Age* (Paris, 1968), p. 138. Of course, for Cyprian, the Roman church is still the *ecclesia principalis unde unitas sacerdotalis exorta est* ("the principal [or original] church from which the priestly unity comes"), but this passage seems to point at the missionary expansion of Christianity in Latin countries through the preaching of Peter and Paul in Rome and not to administrative power. Indeed, in his quarrel with the Roman bishop Stephen, Cyprian attacks the latter for "claiming Peter's succession...and in so doing introducing many new stones (*petras*) and pretending that the multitude of churches are new constructions" (*se successorem Petri tenere contendit...multas alias petras inducat et ecclesiarum multarum nova aedificia constituat*, Ep. 75:17). Indeed, all churches, not only Rome, are for Cyprian "built on Peter." Actually, his goal in the *De unitate* is to defend his own episcopal rights, not Rome's,

Jerusalem, surrounded by the other apostles, as described in the book of Acts, is the model of any bishop presiding over the "catholic" church, in each place, surrounded by his presbyters, is a basic ecclesiological image of the first millennium of Christianity.<sup>24</sup> It is interesting that, in the Western liturgical tradition, Mt 16:13-19 was assigned as the reading for the mass of episcopal ordination.<sup>25</sup> St Ambrose of Milan, speaking of Peter and the bishops, proclaims that what Peter received personally was also received by them all.<sup>26</sup> This is also the view of the venerable Bede<sup>27</sup> and many other Latin writers.

However, side by side with the tradition which saw Peter as the first bishop, the Roman church was viewed as possessing a special "closeness" to Peter (*ecclesia propinqua Petro*) because of the presence of Peter's tomb on the Vatican's hill. Of course, for St Irenaeus, the church of Rome was still the church of Peter *and Paul*, and the tombs of *both* apostles, witnessing to Rome's position as the *only* "apostolic" church in the West, were the object of pilgrimage and piety. But gradually, precisely because Peter was understood as model of the episcopate, the prestige and authority of the bishop of Rome became associated with Peter only, while Paul fell somewhat to the background.<sup>28</sup> This was a "mystical" development, endorsed especially by men like St Leo.<sup>29</sup> I use here the word "mystical," following Yves Congar, because the idea that the bishop of Rome is—in a very special manner—a successor of St Peter is not the result of exegesis or

against the Novatians, and for him "the see of Peter" is his own see of Carthage; cf. my other comments on this point in *Orthodoxy and Catholicity*, p. 15.

24 This is also the main intuition of contemporary Orthodox "eucharistic ecclesiology"; cf. N. Afanassieff, *L'Eglise du Saint Esprit* (Paris, 1972); J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY, 1985); also J. Meyendorff, "Church and Ministry" in *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY, 1983), pp. 49-64.

25 A. Dold, *Das älteste Liturgiebuch der lateinische Kirche* (Texte und Arbeit, I, Abt. H, 26-8) [Beuron, 1936], p. 51.

26 *De dignitate sacerdotali* 2, PL 17, col. 570A.

27 *Necnon episcopis et presbyteris, et omni ecclesiae idem officium committitur*, in Mt 16, quoted in Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 141, note 39. Congar refers to many similar texts in the early Latin writers (*ibid.*, pp. 138-151).

28 Cf. on this point, E. Lanne, "L'Eglise de Rome, a gloriosissimis duobus apostolis Petro et Paulo Romae fundatae et constitutae Ecclesiae," in *Irenikon* 49 (1976), pp. 275-322, and more recently P. Grelot "Pierre et Paul, fondateurs de la primauté romaine," *Istina* XXVII, 1982, pp. 228-268.

29 Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 139. Non-Roman theologians, like the great St Augustine, in his numerous exegetical mentions of Mt 16:18, associates the passage with the "church" without any mention of Rome (cf. A.-M. La Bonnardière, "Tu es Petrus...La pericope Matthieu 16:13-23 dans l'oeuvre de St Augustin," *Irenikon* 34, 4 (1961), pp. 461-499.



theological speculation. Actually, this "mystical" character of the idea probably contributed to the fact that it was so readily used by the Easterners, whenever they wanted or needed the support and sympathy of the popes. Indeed, such recognition of a succession of Peter in Rome was neither wrong theologically, since every bishop possessed the "seat of Peter," nor inaccurate historically, because there was a widespread belief in the presence of Peter's (and Paul's) tomb in Rome. Furthermore, from the Eastern point of view, if such mystical authority existed, it did not involve any administrative power, or infallibility—only a moral and doctrinal prestige, and a sort of prophetic leadership, justified by the fact that Rome had rather consistently taken the right side in the Arian and christological controversies.

From the fourth to the eleventh century, the Roman bishop neither possessed nor claimed "patriarchal" power over the entire West. It is true that, especially since the formalization, under Justinian, of the idea of "pentarchy," i.e., the preeminence of five "patriarchs" (Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem) within the imperial borders, the Easterners somewhat took for granted the existence of a Western patriarchate. In fact, no such institution existed. The bishop of Rome was occasionally addressed as "patriarch" and his residence at the Lateran was designated as the "patriarchate," but his "patriarchal" jurisdiction, i.e., specifically the right to ordain metropolitans (as Constantinople ordained metropolitans for Asia, Pontus and Thrace, or Alexandria ordained all the bishops of Egypt, where there were no regional metropolitans) did not extend over the West, but was restricted to ten provinces, which traditionally coincided with the competence of the prefect of Rome. The bishops of those provinces were known as *suburbicarian*. Their dioceses were located in central and southern Italy, Sicily and Corsica. It is they who constituted the Roman "patriarchate," and were supposed to attend Roman synods.<sup>30</sup> The pope, with imperial permission, also appointed "vicars" to some faraway places, such as Arles in Gaul and Thessalonica, but these vicars were not ordained by him, but elected locally. Their special relation to Rome consisted only in an exemption from judiciary responsibility before the local synod: they could be judged by Rome only. As defined by the council of Sardica (341), the pope also enjoyed a wider,

30 Cf. P. Gaudemet, *L'Eglise et l'Empire romain* (Paris, 1958), p. 445.

and rather vague, right to receive appeals against regional synodal decisions. But this right was not universally recognized and was even formally rejected in Africa.<sup>31</sup> In any case, Rome possessed no "patriarchal" rights over either Milan, or Aquileia, or Gaul, or Spain, or even England, although in the latter country, the church of the Anglo-Saxons was established by the famous papal mission of St Augustine. In all these countries, the local churches were totally independent, or "autocephalous" (to use the later Eastern term).<sup>32</sup>

In the case of pope Gregory the Great (590-604), one can discover with greater clarity how the popes could combine their "mystical" sense of being—in an eminent way—"successors of Peter" with full respect for the universally-held sense of identity and equality of the episcopate. This is shown in St Gregory's famous correspondence with the emperor Maurice and with Eulogios, patriarch of Alexandria, in which he objected against the use of the title "ecumenical patriarch" by his colleague in Constantinople. Although Gregory shows a rather astonishing misunderstanding of the true meaning of the adjective "ecumenical" in a Byzantine context,<sup>33</sup> the case in point gives him an opportunity to denounce any pretension, on his own part, to assume "universal jurisdiction." When Eulogios of Alexandria, having promised not to use the title any more in writing to Constantinople, addresses Gregory himself as universal pope (presumably using the widely accepted term: οἰκουμενικὸς πᾶπας), Gregory is indignant:

I beg you [he writes], never let me hear that word again. For I know who you are and who I am. In position, you are my brother, in character my father. I gave therefore no commands, but...I said you ought not to use such a title in writing either to me or to any one else...I do not consider that anything is an honor to me, by which my brethren lose the honour that is their due. My honour is the honour of the Universal Church, my honour is the united strength of my brethren. But, if your Holiness calls me "Universal pope," you deny that you are yourself what you say I am universally...<sup>34</sup>

This example is clearly indicative of the fact that the "mystical" self-con-

31 For the famous rejection of the *transmarinum iudicium* by the Africans, see the letter *Optaremus* (Mansi, *Collection conciliorum*, IV, col. 515-16; cf. J. B. Brisson, *Autonomisme et christianisme dans l'Afrique romaine* [Paris, 1958], pp. 233-4).

32 Cf. the data in my book *Imperial Unity*, pp. 59-66, 127-147, 314-332.

33 A well-documented discussion of the title can be found in H. G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (München, 1959), pp. 63-4. Referring to the social and political dimensions implied by the patriarch's ministry in the capital of *oikoumene*, the title did not imply any claim to assume the position of a "universal bishop."

34 *Ep.*, VIII, 29, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, *Ep.* II, 31.

sciousness of the popes<sup>35</sup> did not lead them, during those early centuries, to translate it necessarily in claims of *formal* power, disciplinary or doctrinal. A gradual transition, which led to a clearer expression of papal claims took place, in the course of the struggle, in Britain and particularly in Germany, between the traditions of the Irish "Columban" and the Roman practices, defended particularly by St Boniface, the apostle of Germany. To promote doctrinal and disciplinary unity in the West, St Boniface constantly referred to a universal Petrine authority of Rome. After 742, under Boniface's inspiration, *all metropolitans* of the West were to receive a *pallium* from Rome, as a sign of Rome's jurisdiction.<sup>36</sup> It is also precisely at that time that Rome, abandoned by the iconoclastic emperors of Byzantium, sought protection from the Franks. The stage was thus set for a confrontation, primarily political, but also using doctrinal issues (the *filioque*), in a fierce competition between the Frankish empire and Byzantium.

The reign of pope Nicholas I (858-867) and his conflict with patriarch Photius (857-867) is the first major example of an ecclesiastical confrontation, gradually leading to schism. However, in this case, the consensus prevailed once more. Under pope John VIII, particularly at the great Council of St Sophia (879-80), a reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople took place on the basis of the original version of the Creed (without the *filioque*) and a mutual recognition of parity between the two "Romes" in disciplinary matters.<sup>37</sup> This was the last major success of the consensus principle, upon which unity between East and West was based in the earlier centuries. But no consensus policies were possible, once emperor Henry III imposed a "reformed" papacy in Rome (1046). The "mystical" sense of Petrine primacy, still held by St Gregory the Great, a primacy which, in order to be effective, needed a "reception" within the episcopal unity became, with Gregory VII (1073-85), an institutional power, conceived as God-established and non-negotiable.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Gregory himself certainly continued to possess this self-consciousness and to express it in his letters; see for instance, Pietro Conte, *Chiesa e Primato nelle lettere dei Papi del Secolo VII* (Milan, 1971), pp. 192-201.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. text and evidence in Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, p. 204-5, cf. Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity*, pp. 329-332.

<sup>37</sup> On these developments, see primarily Fr. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism. History and Legend* (Cambridge, 1948); more specifically, on the council of 879-80, see J. Meijer, *A Successful Council of Union. A Theological Analysis of the Photian Synod of 879-80* (Thessaloniki, 1975); see below, note 40.

<sup>38</sup> This contrast between Gregory I and Gregory VII Hildebrand is clearly described in the very

If the ecclesiological evolution can be described along these lines for the Christian West, was there some development also in the East?

Historical conditions were obviously different. In the fifth and sixth centuries, the imperial system was still in place, while it was disappearing in the West, with the establishment of "barbarian" kingdoms. The imperial system implied that the four Eastern patriarchates maintained, within their respective limits, much more centralization than existed in the West. The "pentarchy" of patriarchates was intended to assure orderly communication with the imperial center and a pattern of representation at ecumenical councils. Unfortunately, already in the sixth century, it was more a theory than a fact, because in the patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch a very large proportion of the faithful (in Egypt, the vast majority) supported Monophysitism, and the Chalcedonian patriarchs survived only with imperial support, losing much of their independent voice in church affairs. The Muslim conquest of the seventh century suppressed their influence altogether. The independent opinions voiced by patriarch Peter of Antioch concerning relations with Rome in the eleventh century, following the Byzantine reconquest of Syria, is an exception. It was therefore inevitable for the patriarch of the "New Rome" to become the only real spokesman for the East, and most importantly, the only center of missionary expansion of Orthodox Christianity. Whereas, in the fourth-sixth centuries, new churches were appearing in the East in the orbits of Alexandria (Ethiopia, Nubia) and Antioch (Georgia, Persia, India), the spectacular missionary activities which started in Eastern Europe under the aegis of Constantinople in the ninth century created churches which would follow the Constantinopolitan model exclusively. Only in the fifteenth century would the Russian church also engage in missionary expansion, continued until modern times.

In relations with the West, Constantinople acted as the real head of the entire East. This was particularly evident during the Council of St Sophia (879-80), which was a bilateral settlement between the two practically equal centers of

suggestive book by J. M. R. Tillard, O.P., *The Bishop of Rome* (Wilmington, DE, 1983), pp. 50-55; for the transitional period, see H. M. Klinkenberg, "Der römische Primat im 10. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 72. *Kanonische Abteilung* 41 (1955), pp. 1-57. The role of the so-called *Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals*, composed in an unknown place by an unknown falsifier around 850 AD, was important in this development, because it presented the power of Rome and of the clergy, as seen in programs of the reformers, as an original state of affairs in the Church (see a good analysis in Y. Congar, *op. cit.*, pp. 226-32).

Rome and Constantinople, headed by pope John VIII and patriarch Photius.<sup>39</sup>

The authority and actual power of the "ecumenical patriarch" during the entire medieval period and until the fall of Constantinople (1453) always remained inseparable from that of the emperor. At all times, the famous text of the Sixth *Novella* of emperor Justinian, issued in 535, was the ideological basis upon which the relations between emperor and patriarch were based:

There are two great gifts which God, in his love for humanity, has granted from on high: the priesthood (ιερωσύνη) and the imperial dignity (βασιλεία)... If the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, there will be a beneficial symphony (συμφωνία τις ἀγαθή), and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race.<sup>40</sup>

The inseparability of the two functions and their mutual dependence will be reaffirmed at all times, for instance in the critical period following the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders (1204) and the uncertainty which followed concerning the imperial succession. It is the election of the legitimate patriarch in Nicaea which assured the preeminence of the Nicaean Lascarid dynasty over its competitors (particularly in Epirus).<sup>41</sup> But if no imperial legitimacy was possible without the patriarchate, the reverse was also true: as late as 1393, rejecting the request of the Russian grand-prince Basil I for permission to mention the patriarch, but not the emperor, in liturgical commemorations, patriarch Anthony proclaims: "It is impossible to have a patriarch without the emperor," because the emperor is "emperor of the Romans, that is all Christians."<sup>42</sup>

Many Western historians, considering the Byzantine system of church state relations, see it as the very model of "caesaropapism." Such a label, however, is quite inaccurate. It presupposes that the Byzantines admitted

39 Canon 1, RP II, p. 705. Characteristically, the text is concerned with disciplining clerics not only within the limits of the patriarchates of Rome and Constantinople, but universally, in "Asia, Europe, or Lybia."

40 R. Schoell and G. Kroll, eds., *Justiniani Novellae* (Berlin, 1954), p. 35-6.

41 Cf. A. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy Between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epirus* (1217-1233) (Thessaloniki, 1973), cf. also J. Meyendorff, "Ideological Crises in Byzantium, 1071 to 1261." Paper presented at the XVth Congress of Byzantine Studies, Athens, 1976, repr. in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY, 1982), pp. 67-85.

42 Miklosich and Müller, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* I, pp. 188-92; cf. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, London, 1971; repr. Crestwood, NY, n.d.), pp. 264-5; and J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 254-6.

the existence of an absolute infallible power, the person of the emperor. There was never such an admission. In the text of Justinian's *novella*, imperial power is conditioned by "equitable and judicial" exercise; and even more importantly, conciliar decrees, liturgical texts used daily and many hagiographical texts reported profusely and explicitly facts about emperors falling into heresy (e.g., Constans II into Monotheletism, Leo III and Constantine V into iconoclasm, and others), making themselves into "tyrants" (τύραννοι). The divine "gift" bestowed upon the emperor implied, of course, his assuming a charismatic ministry of leadership within the universal Christian society, taken as a whole, including the affairs of the universal church.<sup>43</sup> However, his power was conditioned by his orthodoxy and, although many emperors attempted to define orthodoxy themselves, this worked only if conciliar consensus followed: this can be shown especially in the course of the christological debates of the fifth and sixth centuries,<sup>44</sup> and by such episodes as the resistance of the church against the Union of Lyons (1274). The emperor was also supposed to follow church discipline in his personal life, and could face excommunication if he contravened it, as happened with emperors Leo VI (886-912) and John Tzimiscus (969-976). Furthermore, the writings of church fathers, whose authority could always be invoked (John Chrysostom, Maximus the Confessor) maintained clearly the priority of spiritual matters and doctrinal orthodoxy over imperial interests.<sup>45</sup>

43 Associated generally with the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea, where the latter exalted in typical Hellenistic language the role of emperor Constantine, the "charismatic" role of the emperor is described thus by the canonist Balsamon (twelfth c.): "The emperor does not submit to laws or canons; he can promote an episcopate into a metropolis, and remove it from its own metropolitan; he also can divide episcopal territories, appoint bishops and metropolitans, authorize bishops to perform services in other dioceses without authorization from local bishops, and perform other functions belonging to bishops... Without election, he can promote patriarchs and bishops..." (*Comm. on canon 16 (18-22) of Carthage*, RP III, pp. 349-50). The normal procedure for the election of a patriarch of Constantinople was the nomination of three candidates by the Synod, out of whom the emperor chose one. The emperor also confirmed the election of Roman popes during the Byzantine occupation of Italy (sixth-eighth cc.).

44 Cf. J. Meyendorff, "Emperor Justinian, the Empire and the Church," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22 (1963), pp. 45-60 (repr. in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church*, Crestwood, NY, 1982, pp. 43-66).

45 "The office that prevails in the Church... excels the civil office as much as heaven excels the earth," John Chrysostom, *In Epist. II ad Cor., Hom. 15, 4*, PG 61, col. 507; "No emperor was able to convince the inspired fathers to come to an agreement with heretics... It is for the priests to inquire into and define what concerns the dogmas of the catholic church" (*Acta Maximi*, PG 90, cols. 109-172).

The idea of "symphony" between emperor and patriarch formulated by Justinian is a moral idea, providing no judicial definitions or legal avenues to solve conflicts. It does appear that Byzantine society, which acknowledged the constant and day-to-day involvement of God in its concrete existence, preferred to leave this area as a field of direct divine *oikonomia*. Actually, the empire itself lacked the legal foundation which would seem to us as quite necessary. Very conscious of the importance of Roman law in the life of society, it never developed a law of succession for emperors, leaving the difference between a legitimate sovereign and an usurper as a matter of discretion for the divine will expressed through popular acceptance, or "reception." This is the reason why emperors, who were appointing patriarchs, were also themselves dependent (often for their survival) upon the church's support and cooperation.

With the exception of conciliar canons which defined his patriarchal jurisdiction in Asia Minor (canon 28 of Chalcedon), there were few texts describing the powers of the "ecumenical patriarch." The so-called *Epanagoge* (Ἐπαναγωγή τοῦ νόμου), a ninth century statute whose author may have been patriarch Photius, but whose exact juridical standing is not clear, describes the respective duties of the emperor and the patriarch. The text implies that the author, after the clearly caesaropapistic activities of the iconoclasts, wanted to reduce imperial discretionary powers. Imposing duties on the emperor (he must be "versed in the dogmas of the Holy Trinity"), he calls the patriarch the "living image of Christ" (εἰκὼν ζῶσα Χριστοῦ).<sup>46</sup> This title, given to the patriarch, led some authors to consider the *Epanagoge* as an expression of Byzantine "papism," but this would be so only if the text was an ecclesiastical document, describing the role of the patriarch vis-à-vis the other bishops. The *Epanagoge* is a state document, giving a description of the social and political role of the ecumenical patriarch, whose role as bishop of the capital, always close to the emperor, was to project the "image of Christ" in the life of the *state*. The ecclesiastical texts which mention the patriarch of Constantinople never present him in "papal" terms, and often insist on limiting his power. Theodore Balsamon, the famous canonist of the twelfth century who prides himself on being "a pure Constantinopolitan" and whose goal is to assure that the archbishop of Constantinople "enjoys all the rights

46 II, 5, III, 1. I. and P. Zepos, eds., *Jus Graecoromanum* II (Athens, 1931), pp. 241, 242.

bestowed upon him by the divine canons without scandal,"<sup>47</sup> makes a point to remind his readers of the humble historical origins of the church of the capital and the limits of its canonical powers. Before 381, he writes, "that city of Byzas was not an archbishopric, but a [simple] bishop was ordained in it by the metropolitan of Heraclea." After becoming a patriarchate in 451, the archbishop does not ordain all the bishops of Pontus, Thrace and Asia, but only the metropolitans; he does not appoint them, but elections of three candidates are held locally, of which one is then selected for ordination by the archbishop of the imperial capital.<sup>48</sup> He also clearly recognizes patriarchal centralization as a novelty, recalling the fact that in the Nicaean legislation of 325, all the metropolitans were "autocephalous," i.e., elected by their own synods, and he continues by citing examples of autocephalous churches, whose existence had nothing to do with Constantinople. "Do not be surprised," he writes,

if you find also other autocephalous churches (ἐκκλησίας αὐτοκεφάλους), for instance the churches of Bulgaria, Cyprus and Iberia [i.e., Georgia in the Caucasus—J.M.]. For the archbishop of Bulgaria [i.e., Ohrid—J.M.] was honored by emperor Justinian...<sup>49</sup> Whereas the Third Council honored the archbishop of Cyprus...<sup>50</sup> and a decree (διάγνωσις) of the synod of Antioch honored [the head of] the church of Iberia. It is said indeed that in the days of the most holy patriarch lord Peter of Theoupolis, the great Antioch, there was a conciliar disposition stating that the church of Iberia, then submitted to the patriarch of Antioch, should be free and autocephalous.<sup>51</sup>

The conflict which opposed Constantinople and Rome gave rise to an ecclesiological debate about the meaning of Petrine texts claimed by the pope to justify his primacy. It is these polemics which lead some Byzantine writers to invoke the legend, reported by Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth c.)

47 Ἐγὼ δὲ κωνσταντινουπολίτης ὢν ἀκραιφνέστατος...θέλω καὶ εὐχομαι ἔχειν τὸν κωνσταντινουπόλεως ἀσκανδαλίστως πάντα τὰ παρὰ τῶν θείων κανόνων ἐπιφιλοτιμηθέντα αὐτῷ προνόμια (*Comm. on Chalc.* 28, RP II, 285-6).

48 *Comm. on I. Const.* 2, *ibid.*, pp. 174-5.

49 The reference here is to the claim of the autocephalous patriarchs or archbishops of Ohrid to have inherited the rights of *Justiniana Prima*, Justinian's birthplace. On Ohrid cf. H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida* (Leipzig, 1902); I. Snegarov, *Istorija na Okhridskata arkhiepiskopiya*, I (Sofia, 1924); A. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy Between the Kingdom of Nicea and the Principality of Epicus (1217-1233)*, (Thessaloniki, 1973).

50 Canon 8 of the council of Ephesus, RP II, 205-6.

51 There is some debate as to whether the patriarch Peter referred to in Balsamon is Peter the Fuller (5th c.) or Peter III (1052-56); on this see M. Tarchnisvili, "Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Kirchlich Autokephalie Georgiens," *Kyrios*, 1940-1, pp. 177-93 (repr. in *Le Muséon* 73, 1960, pp. 107-26; also C. Toumanoff, "Caucasia and Byzantium," *Traditio* 27 (1971), pp. 167-9.

of the founding of the church of Byzantium by the apostle Andrew, who "first called" his brother Peter to Jesus (Jn 1:41). However, the argument prevailing among the Byzantine theologians was that the bishop of "old Rome" was entitled to be seen historically as successor of Peter, but that he was not alone in being able to make that claim. Every bishop is sitting on Peter's chair,<sup>52</sup> including the archbishop of both the "old" and the "new" Romes. If both had received primacies, it was from either imperial decisions (the *Donatio Constantini* was implied here) or conciliar decrees.

The extraordinary survival of the ecumenical patriarchate, following the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade (1204) must be recognized as a remarkable historical fact, showing that, in spite of its institutional link with the empire, the church was preserving its inner independence and vitality. Both during the Latin occupation (1204-61) and in the Palaeologan period (1261-1453), as the empire was reduced to a political shadow, the patriarchate continued to exercise great authority in the Orthodox states and exercised direct jurisdiction over vast territories of Eastern Europe. Just as the Roman church, using its spiritual prestige during the barbarian invasions in the West (fifth-sixth cc.) filled the political and cultural void created by the collapse of imperial Rome, the ecumenical patriarchate asserted new powers and political influence. This development appears with particular clarity in the activities of patriarchs of a monastic background following the victory of "hesychasm" in 1347-51. To quote but one example, patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, writing to Russian princes in 1370 in an effort to convince them to obey the metropolitan of Kiev (residing in Moscow) and appointed by the patriarchate, defines universal powers of Constantinople in terms which would not have been disavowed by the Roman popes:

Since God has appointed Our Humility as leader of all Christians found anywhere in the inhabited earth, as solicitor and guardian of their souls, all of them depend on me (πάντες εἰς ἐμὲ ἀνακείμενοι), the father and teacher of them all... However, since it is beyond the possibility of one weak and powerless man to walk around the entire inhabited earth, Our Humility chooses the best among men, the most eminent in virtue, establishes and ordains them as pastors, teachers and high-priests, and sends them to the ends of the universe...<sup>53</sup>

52 Cf. my article "St Peter in Byzantine Theology," in J. Meyendorff, *et al.*, *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church* (London, 1963); also, J. Darrouzès, "Les documents byzantins du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle sur la primauté romaine," *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 23 (1965), pp. 42-88.

53 F. Milkosich and J. Müller, eds., *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* I (Vienna, 1860), p.

It is unlikely, of course, that such a diplomatic and disciplinary document, addressed to Russians, was meant to reflect accurately a theology of the episcopate. Nicetas of Ancyra, a contemporary of Philotheos, describes patriarchal functions in quite a different way. He writes:

Do not exaggerate the importance of the title of patriarch, which is given to him. For every bishop is also called "patriarch"...,<sup>54</sup> and titles of precedence are common to all of us, since all the bishops are fathers, shepherds and teachers... For the laying on of hands is the same for all, and our participation in the divine liturgy is identical and all pronounce the same prayers.<sup>55</sup>

The attitude of Philotheos must, therefore, be reflecting a *de facto* situation rather than an ecclesiological theory. It is interesting to note that a disciple and successor of Philotheos, the almost contemporary patriarch Anthony, writing to the same Russians, would affirm again with great force the universal significance of the empire, inseparable from the authority of the ecumenical patriarch.<sup>56</sup> However, as the ultimate end of the empire would come in 1453, the patriarchate would assume, within the Orthodox world now dominated by the Ottomans (and, therefore, excluding Russia) a role which the strong patriarchs of the fourteenth century, such as Philotheos, have prepared: a role of social, cultural and political leadership. Significantly, such a role will be both understood and confirmed in terms of Islamic law by the Turkish sultans, who will confirm the particular functions of the patriarch as head of all the single community (or *millet*)—a regime which survived until modern times.<sup>57</sup>

### *A Word of Conclusion: Schism and Union Attempts*

The gradual estrangement between Rome and Constantinople was rooted in a variety of historical, cultural and, indeed, theological issues. Some of these issues appear to us today as quite futile, others—particularly the theological dimensions involved in the interpolation of the Creed with

521; on the policies of Philotheos in Russia, see my book *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 173-199.

54 Nicetas refers then to a passage of St Gregory of Nazianzus, referring to his own father, a bishop, as "patriarch" (*Or.* 43, 37, PG 36, col. 545C).

55 J. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie byzantine* (Paris, 1966), pp. 222-4.

56 Cf. above, note 41.

57 Cf. on that, S. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity. A Study of the Patriarchate of Constantinople From the Even of the Turkish Conquest to the Greek War of Independence* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 165-85.



the word *filioque*—are of very serious nature. However, the reason why such differences, whether important or less important, led to *schism* must be seen in ecclesiology. The East and West lost the means of solving difficulties which separated them. In the East, there was no alternative to conciliarity for resolving issues which inevitably arise in the relations between local churches. In the West, an alternative existed: obedience to and communion with the “see of Peter.”

Throughout the first millennium of Christian history, although the “Petrine” theory of Roman primacy was slowly but clearly emerging, conciliarity eventually triumphed in each particular conflict. However, such an accommodating attitude, practiced by earlier popes, became unacceptable for the “reformed” papacy of the eleventh century. Seen in this light, the incident of 1054—which cannot be considered as the actual *date* of the schism—was nevertheless clearly symbolic of a state of affairs which was making Church unity unattainable. The criteria for such unity were clearly diverging.

The numerous union attempts undertaken later, and particularly in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, all failed to approach the ecclesiological difference directly and candidly. This is particularly true in the case of the one union attempt which came the closest to being a success, the council of Ferrara-Florence (1438-9). Although the procedure adopted was initially in conformity with the Eastern pattern—a council, not a simple recognition of papal authority—the results were such that their only practical result was to suppress the anti-papal opposition of the “Conciliarists” in the West. Actually, no real debate on the problem of authority took place, and the Easterners seem to have been unaware of the agonizing debates on church authority which were taking place on that very topic in Western Europe.<sup>58</sup>

Following the fall of Constantinople (1453), Rome and Constantinople had separate histories. It is clear, however, especially after Vatican II, that the dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, explicitly or implicitly, centers upon the issue of church authority and conciliarity. The same issue was also at stake in the medieval relations between Rome

<sup>58</sup> Cf. J. Meyendorff, “Was There an Encounter Between East and West at Florence?” A presentation made at a conference held in 1989 and marking the 550th anniversary of the Council of Florence (cf. chapter 6, p. 87).

and Constantinople. Whereas the Orthodox clearly recognize conciliar decisions as the only basis of Constantinople’s primacy, defining the exercise of its authority, can they ever be recognized also as decisive in shaping the primacy of Rome? What kind of conciliarity is compatible with the “charismatic” claim to petrine apostolicity which has provided, for so many Western Christians, a haven of credal security, but has also been for so many others a spiritual stumbling block?

### A Note On Sources

#### Primary sources

To establish a full list of sources for the history of the churches of Rome and Constantinople during the first millennium would be practically equivalent to listing all the sources for Church history, West and East, for that period. Basic references can be found for Rome in Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum. Editionem secundam, correctam et auctam auspiciis G. Wattenbach curaverunt F. Kaltenbrunner, P. Ewald, S. Loewenfeld*, 2 vol., 1885-8. The most comprehensive collections of documents are to be found in *Bullarum, Diplomatum et Privilegiorum SS. Romanorum Pontificum*, ed. G. Tomasetti *et al.*, 24 vols., Turin, 1857-72; and in *Epistolae Romanorum Pontificum... a S. Hilario usque ad Pelagium II*, a cura A. Thiel, Braunsberg, 1868. Critical editions of papal letters appeared in the series of *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae*, particularly for Gregory the Great (ed. E. Perels) and John VIII (VII, ed. Caspar). Many papal documents are accessible in J. P. Migne’s *Patrologia Latina*. The *Liber Pontificalis* (ed. L. Duchesne, 2nd ed., Paris, 1957) is also a basic source.

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E., *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*. I: *Römische Kirche und Imperium Romanum* (Tübingen, 1930); II: *Das Papsttum unter byzantinischer Herrschaft* (Tübingen, 1933); Congar, Y., *L'ecclésiologie du haut Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1968); De Vries, W., *Orient et Occident, les structures ecclésiales vues dans l'histoire des sept premiers conciles oecuméniques* (Paris, 1974); Duchesne, L., *L'Eglise au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1925); Dvornik, F., *Byzance et la primauté romaine* (Paris, 1964); Id. *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, MA, 1958); Gill, J., *Byzantium and the Papacy, 1198-1400* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1979); De Vries, W., *Orient et Occident, les structures ecclésiales vues dans l'histoire des sept premiers conciles oecuméniques* (Paris, 1974); Haller, *Das Papsttum. Idee und Wirklichkeit*, 5 vols. (Basel, 1951-5); Hartmann, G., *Der Primat des römischen Bischofs bei Pseudo-Isidor* (Stuttgart, 1930); Herrin, J., *The Formation of Christendom* (Princeton, 1987); Jalland, T. G., *The Church and the Papacy. A Historical Study* (London, 1944); Jugie, M., *Le schisme byzantin: Aperçu historique et doctrinal* (Paris, 1941); Maximos of Sardis, *Tò οἰκουμενικὸν πατριαρχεῖον ἐν τῇ ὀρθοδόξῳ ἐκκλησίᾳ* (Thessaloniki, 1972); Michel, A., *Die Kaiser macht in der Ostkirche (843-1204)* (Darmstadt, 1959); Meyendorff, J., *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge, 1981); id., *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions. The Church, 450-680 AD* (Crestwood, NY, 1989); id., ed., *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church* (London, 1963); id. *Living Tradition* (Crestwood, NY, 1978); id., *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY, 1983); Morrison, K. F., *The Two Kingdoms. Ecclesiology in Carolingian Political Thought* (Princeton, 1964); id., *Tradition and Authority in the Western Church, 300-1140* (Princeton, 1969); Richards, J., *The Popes and the Papacy in the Early Middle Ages, 476-750* (London, 1979); Symonds, H. E., *The Church Universal and the See of Rome. A Study of the Relations Between the Episcopate and the Papacy up to the Schism between East and West* (London, 1939); Tillard, J. M. R., *L'évêque de Rome* (Paris, 1982); Ullmann, W., *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages. A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical and Lay Power* (2nd ed., 1962); Zizioulas, I. D., *Η ένότης τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐν τῇ θείᾳ εὐχαριστίᾳ καὶ τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ κατὰ τοὺς τρεῖς πρώτους αἰῶνας* (Athens, 1965).

## 2

## Byzantium as Center of Theological Thought in the Christian East<sup>1</sup>

Established in the fourth century as a "New Rome" on the Bosphorus to serve as the new capital of the Christian Roman Empire, Constantinople (Byzantium) gradually but inevitably became also the major intellectual center of Eastern Christendom. Amputated in the fifth century of its entire Western half, the Empire survived for centuries, united by the three elements which are generally considered as constitutive of the "Byzantine" civilization: Christian faith, Roman political tradition, and Greek language. One should always remember, however, that the use of Greek as the official language of the state and as the main channel of intellectual creativity did not imply that the Byzantine Christian society was a Greek nation-state. Its multi-ethnic and multi-cultured character survived until the late Middle Ages. Armenians, Syrians, Slavs, Georgians, and representatives of other ethnic groups either found their way into the Byzantine social hierarchy, or, when political circumstances allowed, formed independent states which nevertheless continued to consider themselves part of a Byzantium-centered Christendom and members of the canonical structures of the Orthodox Church. It is from Byzantium also that the entire "Byzantine Commonwealth"<sup>2</sup> was receiving norms of tradition, patterns of religious thought, and criteria of worship and spirituality.

In the fifth century the Christian East was still polycentric: exegetical and theological traditions were distinct in Alexandria, in Antioch, and in Syriac-speaking Mesopotamia. However, the bitter antagonisms generated by the Christological controversies and the consequent Monophysite schism, adhered to by a majority of Syrians and Egyptians, weakened substantially the ancient intellectual centers of the Middle East. The

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, edited by Patrick Henry, copyright © 1984, Fortress Press. Used by permission of Augsburg Fortress.

<sup>2</sup> D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971).

Muslim conquest of the seventh century isolated them completely from Constantinople. The two Romes—the “old” on the Tiber and the “new” on the Bosphorus—remained face to face within imperial Orthodoxy.

In the age of Emperor Justinian (527-565), a crucial period in the building up of medieval Byzantine civilization, the theology of the church of Constantinople consciously attempted to synthesize competing traditions coming from the past and to overcome their divisiveness. In Constantinople itself the prevailing influence had come from Antioch. The great John Chrysostom (c. 347-407; archbishop 393-404) and the ill-fated Nestorius (d. c. 451; archbishop 428-431) were both trained in Antioch, brought to the capital the exegetical and liturgical traditions of Syria, and established a solid tradition of the christology that would eventually be known as “Chalcedonian.” Nevertheless, in the sixth century, the christology associated with Alexandria had to be accepted as pattern because of the unionist (today we would say “ecumenical”) policies of Justinian aimed at appeasing the Monophysites. These syncretistic trends were obviously the result of the worldwide unifying role played by the imperial capital. Just as Rome in the West, Constantinople could not exercise its “ecumenical” authority without attempting to reconcile and to arbitrate—a role which excluded the unilateral adoption of any particular theological trend. Remarkably, the result was not a hybrid compromise but an authentic synthesis.<sup>3</sup>

The imperial capital was the seat of institutions of higher learning: a university, organized in 425 by decrees of Theodosius II and continuing an intermittent existence until the late Middle Ages, and a patriarchal school for the education of higher clergy.<sup>4</sup> Schools existed in other cities,

3 See J. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, 2nd ed., (Crestwood, NY, 1975), pp. 69-89; for similar evaluations of Byzantine theology, see also Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1978), and the article, “Byzanz,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, 7.4/5 (Berlin and New York, 1981), 500-32. For a remarkable general history of trends and ideas, see J. Pelikan, *The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*, The Christian Tradition 2 (Chicago, 1974). References and bibliography in H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), and for the late medieval period in G. Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz. Der Streit um die theologische Methodik in der spätbyzantinischen Geistesgeschichte (14/15. Jh.), seine systematischen Grundlagen und seine historische Entwicklung*, Byzantinisches Archiv 15 (Munich, 1977).

4 *Codex Theodosianus* 14.9.3, and 6.21.1. F. Fuchs, *Die höheren Schulen von Konstantinopel im Mittelalter*, Byzantinisches Archiv 8 (Leipzig and Berlin, 1926); L. Bréhier, “Notes sur l’histoire de l’enseignement supérieur à Constantinople,” *Byzantion* 3 (1926), pp. 72-94, and 4 (1927/8),

and some monasteries were centers of theological learning. However, the influence of those schools—secular or ecclesiastical—could at no point be compared with the impact exercised by the medieval universities of the West after the twelfth century.

The imperial university of Constantinople contributed to the preservation, in a narrow and aristocratic circle of intellectuals, of the classical tradition of Greek antiquity. It taught “ancient Greek grammar and rhetoric” and graduated men “justified to serve in the secrets of the imperial administration and the upper echelons of the Church,” but “their culture was impenetrable to a wider public because it was expressed in a dead language and presupposed a body of arcane knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> With the exception of Patriarch Photius (c. 810-895; patriarch 858-857, 877-886), whose encyclopedic competence and ecclesiastical involvement influenced religious thought, none of the intellectuals associated with the university can be listed as influential theologians. Like Michael Psellos (1018-1078), they limited their writings almost entirely to philosophical or rhetorical matters. And when they dared to express philosophical conviction in theological terms, they faced ecclesiastical condemnation. Thus,

on the eve of the period when the West would commit its mind to the philosophy of the ancients and enter the great epoch of Scholasticism, the Byzantine Church solemnly refused any such synthesis between the Greek mind and Christianity, remaining committed only to the synthesis reached in the patristic period.<sup>6</sup>

But was theology advanced creatively through the means of the patriarchal school of Constantinople, if not through the imperial university? It does not seem so. The only period for which we have historical evidence for an active role of “patriarchal” teachers in theological debates is the twelfth century; but these debates, while conducted on a high level of sophistication, took place in a strictly antiheretical and scholastic sphere.<sup>7</sup> Theological creativity, as we will see below, was happening elsewhere.

pp. 13-28; and “L’enseignement classique et l’enseignement religieux à Byzance,” *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 21 (1941), pp. 34-69; F. Dvornik, “Photius et la réorganisation de l’Académie patriarcale,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 68 (1950), pp. 108-25.

5 C. Mango, “Discontinuity with the Classical Past in Byzantium,” in M. Mullett and R. Scott, *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition* (Birmingham, 1981), pp. 49-50.

6 J. Gouillard, “Le Synodikon de l’Orthodoxie—Édition et commentaire,” *Travaux et Mémoires* 6 (Paris, 1976), pp. 305-24; and C. Niarchos, “The Philosophical Background of the Eleventh Century Revival of Learning in Byzantium,” in Mullett and Scott, *Byzantium and the Classical Tradition*, pp. 127-35.

7 J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 64.



These rather elusive facts concerning the relationship between theology and learning in Byzantium explain the widely contradictory opinions expressed by historians concerning Byzantine Christian civilization. The historians of the Enlightenment (Voltaire, Gibbon) despised Byzantium's "medieval barbarism," but credited it with the (very limited) merit of having preserved the manuscript texts of ancient Greek authors. In the nineteenth century the revival of Byzantine studies was based on the same premises: in Byzantium "Greek classical literature was the basis of public education,"<sup>8</sup> and Byzantium was even recognized as the real source of the Italian Renaissance, since it transmitted the Greek heritage to the West. Recently, however, the systematically critical attitude of the Byzantine Church toward ancient Hellenism has been recognized more clearly. What then was the real contribution of Christian Byzantium? Was it only a backward, reactionary, and ultra-conservative civilization, oblivious of antiquity and contemptuous of Catholic Christianity?

According to a modern historian, "there can be no doubt that behind the mock classical facade of Byzantium lay a reality that was very different."<sup>9</sup> What was the reality? It is not the place here to answer this question in all its aspects, but only in one: the nature of the Byzantine experience of the Christian faith and, therefore, of Byzantine Orthodox theology. We have noted already that this theology was not made primarily in schools. It was not seen as a scientific discipline, taught with an academic methodology, but rather as a system of truths, learned by reading Scripture (or listening to it in church), by praying either liturgically or personally, by hearing sermons, or by studying under a teacher whose competence was not only intellectual but also spiritual. It can be said that such was also the general attitude towards theology in the West, before Scholasticism. St Augustine did not think otherwise. In a sense, Byzantium preserved the relationship between the Christian revelation and secular thought which existed in Late Antiquity.

I will illustrate this Byzantine, and, more generally, Eastern Christian understanding of theology by making three points.

8 R. Browning, "The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century," *Byzantion* 32 (1962), pp. 167-202.

9 C. Mango, "Discontinuity," p. 50.

1) *In the East, theology was always defined as experience or communion, not as a purely conceptual knowledge.* Indeed, "the eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology; between personal experience of the divine mysteries and the dogma defined by the Church."<sup>10</sup> Already the Cappadocian Fathers, particularly Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389), used the term *theologia* to mean a contemplation of the divine Trinity rather than intellectual discourse about the Trinity. Thus the title of *Theologian* is reserved primarily, in Byzantine texts, to St John the Evangelist, St Gregory of Nazianzus, and also the mystic St Symeon, known as the "New Theologian" (949-1022). What is clearly implied in the title "theologian" is not scientific erudition in theology, but a visionary awareness of divine Truth.

Evagrius Ponticus (346-399), a friend of the Cappadocian Fathers and the first prominent teacher of monastic spirituality, used a famous expression: "If you are a theologian you truly pray. If you truly pray you are a theologian."<sup>11</sup> For Evagrius himself this statement had a peculiar Origenistic and Neoplatonic meaning which we shall not discuss here, but in the later tradition of Eastern spirituality, the union of theology and prayer simply affirmed the experiential, or "mystical" character of Christian theology: the knowledge of God was seen as inseparable from holiness.

This approach to theology carried the danger of subjectivism and spiritualistic individualism. Was not the "theologian" actually understood as a gnostic, endowed with an esoteric privilege of knowing God? And, indeed, the monastic circle of the fourth century within which the "mystical" understanding of theology was strongly affirmed also produced the movement known as "Messalianism." The Messalians rejected the sacraments of the institutional church, particularly baptism, and considered personal prayer to be the only necessary and efficient means of communion with God.<sup>12</sup> But the

10 V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY, 1976), p. 8.

11 Chapters on prayer 60; ed. J. E. Bamberger, *Evagrius Ponticus: Paraktikos and Chapters on Prayer*, Cistercian Studies 4 (Spencer, MA, 1970), p. 8.

12 There is abundant secondary literature on Messalianism, but many issues connected with the movement are still controversial, particularly the meaning of the writings ascribed to Macarius the Great and identified as "Messalian" by several modern scholars, most recently H. Dörries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon*, Abh. des Akad. der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 103 (Göttingen, 1978). My view on the subject: "Messalianism or Anti-Messalianism? A fresh look at the 'Macarian' problem," in P. Granfield and J. A. Jungmann, eds., *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten* 2 (Münster, 1970), pp. 585-90.

Byzantine Church was aware of the danger. Messalianism was repeatedly condemned on several doctrinal counts, but particularly because it considered the knowledge of God a personal, ascetic achievement, independent of the sacramental nature of the Church. The Church affirmed that, on the contrary, divine life and knowledge of God are gifts, both gratuitous and common to all the baptized, though also dependent upon personal spiritual effort.<sup>13</sup>

This debate around Messalianism and spiritual experience continued, implicitly or explicitly, throughout the history of Christian Byzantium. And although Messalianism was rejected in its heretical anti-ecclesial form, the prophetic and experiential nature of theology was never disavowed.

2) *Positive theological speculation was always confronted with Divine Transcendence.* In an often quoted comment on Eccl. 3:7 ("A time to keep silence, and a time to speak"), Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-c. 395) writes:

In speaking of God, when there is question of his essence, *then is the time to keep silence*. When, however it is a question of his operation [*energeia*], a knowledge of which can come down even to us, *that is the time to speak* of his omnipotence by telling of his works and explaining his deeds, and to use words to this extent.<sup>14</sup>

The notion that the divine essence is totally beyond created knowledge or communion, and that God can be participated only through his "grace" or "energy," was clearly expressed by the fourth-century Cappadocian Fathers, in the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius (beginning of the sixth century), by Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662), and in the late Middle Ages it was more fully developed by Gregory Palamas (c. 1296-1359).

What was involved was not only "apophatic" or "negative" theology as such. Apophaticism was necessary as a liberation of the mind by means of the elimination of all concepts identifying God with that which he is not, i.e., from all idolatry. But true experience, and therefore true theology, went beyond conceptual apophaticism; it was a positive experience of divine transcendence, or a "knowledge through ignorance." "The act of undergoing negation in spiritual vision, negation linked to the transcendence of the Object, differs from negative theology and is superior to it." Vision of God and communion with God can never imply *possession*: "In

13 On the teaching of Gregory Palamas on this point see J. Meyendorff, *A Study of Gregory Palamas*, 2nd ed. (London, 1974), pp. 161-62.

14 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Eccl. Sermo 7*, in W. Jaeger, ed., *Works 5* (Leiden, 1962), pp. 415-16.

spiritual vision the transcendent light of God only appears *the more completely hidden*."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, vision and communion are not forms of natural created knowledge, but they are "life in Christ," in the deified humanity of the incarnate Logos.

This understanding of divine transcendence implies the experiential nature of theology, described above, but it also eliminates in principle the possibility of integrating theology into a preexisting philosophical system. Whatever influence Greek philosophy, particularly Neoplatonism, could in fact have had on particular aspects of Greek patristic thought, the official position of the Church was critical. On the occasion of the trial in 1082 of a Neoplatonizing intellectual, John Italos, a special anathema, repeated annually in all churches for the first Sunday of Lent, condemned the "impious teaching of the Greeks."<sup>16</sup>

Seen in historical perspective, this formal renunciation in the eleventh century of the Greek philosophical inheritance in Greek-speaking Byzantium offers a remarkable contrast with the almost simultaneous "discovery" of Aristotle in the Latin West on the eve of the great synthesis between philosophy and theology known as Scholasticism. Paradoxically, in the Middle Ages the East was becoming less "Greek" than the West.

3) *The problem of doctrinal authority in the Byzantine Orthodox Church.* There has never been any doubt that Scripture is the supreme criterion of Christian truth. The Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries were primarily exegetes, as shown by the sheer volume of scriptural commentaries produced by them. The same tradition of exegesis continued in the medieval period. However, the Greek East took a longer time than the West in settling the problem of the *canon*: variations, particularly concerning the status of the "longer" canon of the Old Testament and of Revelation, existed until the eighth century. The Council in Trullo (692) accepted a canon which included books of the "longer" canon, even 3 Maccabees, but it omitted Wisdom, Tobit, and Judith. John of Damascus (c. 675-c.753) failed to include Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, although he considered them "admirable."<sup>17</sup> These hesitations, which ended with a

15 Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 2.3.31, in J. Meyendorff, ed., *Grégoire Palamas: Défense des saints hésychastes. Introduction, Texte critique, Traduction et notes*, 2nd ed. (Louvain, 1973) 2, pp. 439, 449.

16 J. Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie—Édition et commentaire," *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (Paris, 1967), p. 57.

17 John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 4.17, in J.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 94.1180BC, also

general acceptance of the "longer" canon (although Revelation never entered liturgical usage), did not cause much debate or controversy, which indicates clearly that the Church and its tradition were not dependent upon a fixed canon of God-inspired texts, but were seen as sufficient sources of Christian truth, in continuity with the Apostolic Church.

The bishops were, of course, the normal witnesses to tradition. The episcopal council (or "synod") in a given geographical area, and the ecumenical council of the world scale, were called to solve difficulties, settle disputes, and take the necessary doctrinal options. Quite significantly, however, every council of the Byzantine era emphasized that it was not changing anything in either the content or the meaning of the faith "once delivered to the saints," and that new doctrinal definitions were reluctantly made only to reject misinterpretations of the apostolic faith by heretics.<sup>18</sup> But this deliberately conservative attitude of the councils did not prevent them from sanctioning new terminologies (e.g., the doctrine of the "two natures" at Chalcedon in 451) or giving new interpretations to earlier definitions (e.g., the sanction given to a "Cyrillian" interpretation of Chalcedon at Constantinople in 553) or even formally claiming to "develop" the doctrinal formula of the past.<sup>19</sup>

The councils constituted, therefore, the normal means by which the Church exercised its responsibility for maintaining the true faith. However, episcopal magisterial authority never suppressed—or substituted itself for—an understanding of the Christian faith as an experience accessible to the Church as community and to each Christian as a personal experience of the Truth. This explains why the *liturgical tradition* was so often referred to as an authority, side by side with Scripture and the Fathers,<sup>20</sup> or why, in an extreme situation, a saint could oppose his prophetic experience and inspired conviction to that of the bishops. When confronted by his Monothelite judges with the fact that the entire episcopate, including apparently the Bishop of Rome, had accepted Monotheli-

tism, St Maximus the Confessor answered by a paraphrase of Gal 1:8: "The Holy Spirit anathematizes even angels, if they utter teachings contrary to the (true) kerygma."<sup>21</sup>

This explains why, in Byzantine Orthodoxy, doctrinal pronouncements made by councils still needed ecclesial "reception," not in terms of a democratic referendum but in terms of a sanction by the Holy Spirit speaking through the whole Church.

It is primarily because theological truth could be neither conceived of as a system of concepts to be taught as a scholastic discipline, nor reduced to authoritative pronouncements of the *magisterium*, that creative theologizing in medieval Byzantium was largely pursued in monastic circles. Starting with Maximus the Confessor, the great names of Byzantine theology are monastic names (Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas), whereas non-monastic figures, like Photius, or the numerous anti-Latin polemicists, or the canonists of the twelfth century, limited themselves to a scholarly, intelligent, but essentially conservative, preservation of the *depositum fidei*.

This conservative trend is reflected, for example, in the following solemn instruction issued by the Council in Trullo (692):

It is necessary for those who preside over the churches...to teach all the clergy and the people..., collecting out of divine Scripture the thoughts and judgments of truth, but not exceeding the limits now fixed, nor varying from the tradition of the God-fearing Fathers. But if any issue arises concerning Scripture, it should not be interpreted other than as the luminaries and teachers of the Church have expounded in their writings; let them [the bishops] become distinguished for their knowledge of patristic writings rather than for composing treatises out of their own heads.<sup>22</sup>

However, when Gregory Palamas, in his controversy with Barlaam the Calabrian about the knowledge of God, solicited and obtained the support of the monks of Mount Athos, the *Haghioretic Tome* ("Tome of the Holy Mountain") issued on that occasion (1340) proclaimed the legitimacy within the New Testament community of a prophetic ministry, speaking authoritatively of the realities of the future Kingdom, just as Old Testament prophets announced the coming of Christ. This New Testament prophecy, a particular responsibility of the monks, was not necessar-

21 *Acta Maximi*, in *Patrologia Graeca* 90.121C.

22 Canon 19, in K. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Syntagma ton theion kai hieron kanonon* 2 (Athens, 1852), p. 346.

ed. B. Kotter (Berlin, 1973), p. 211.

18 For instance, the preamble of the Chalcedonian definition (451), *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta* (Bologna, 1973), p. 84.

19 The doctrine of "uncreated energies," formulated in 1351, was seen as a "development" (*anaptuxis*) of the decree on the two energies and two wills of Christ published by the Sixth Ecumenical Council (680), *Synodal Tome of 1351*, in *Patrologia Graeca* 151.722B.

20 See for example the liturgical references in the writings of Gregory Palamas against Barlaam, in Meyendorff, *Palamas: Défense* 2, p. 746.

ily bound by formulae of the past, but spoke of the Truth on the basis of direct spiritual experience:

The doctrines [of the church] are suitably formulated, known to all and boldly proclaimed. However, at the time of the Mosaic law, these dogmas were mysteries foreseen in the Spirit by the prophets alone. So, the good things promised to the Saints [e.g., James 2:5] for the age to come are the mysteries of the Gospel community, granted to and foreseen by those who, at least in part, are possessing the vision of the Spirit, as first fruits [of the Kingdom].<sup>23</sup>

The creativity of monastic theology in Byzantium, whatever its one-sidedness in some respects, was therefore based on an "eschatological gnoseology," inseparable from the notion that the Christian community sacramentally anticipates the Kingdom of God. This is why the concept of "mysticism," which in our modern usage designates individualistic and emotional religiosity, is inadequate when applied to Eastern Christian theology and spirituality, unless it refers to the *mysterion* "of Christ and the Church" (Eph 5:32), and implies the eschatological, sacramental, and ecclesial dimensions of theological knowledge.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory Palamas, *Sygggrammata* 2, ed. P. Chrestou (Thessaloniki, 1966), p. 567, also *Patrologia Graeca* 150.1225.

## 3

## Two Visions of the Church: East and West on the Eve of Modern Times<sup>1</sup>

Medieval Byzantium has envisaged its own Christian civilization as the ultimate fulfillment of history. By establishing a "New Rome" on the Bosphorus, Emperor Constantine was thought to have accomplished the divine plan that was intended in the incarnation itself: to inaugurate the kingdom of God on earth. The empire lasted an entire millennium without changing the basic content of this vision, which was nevertheless challenged internally and externally. Internally, Christian Scriptures, the liturgical tradition and the ever-present prophetic presence of monastic asceticism pointed to a different eschatology: the kingdom of God was distinct from the earthly empire and was still to come. Externally, the borders and the influence of Byzantium were shrinking and God seemed to condone the Islamic conquest of vast, traditionally Christian areas. Until the thirteenth century, the Easterners continued to envisage the Christian West as part of the God-established *oikoumene*: the Latins were slightly erring brothers, wrongly influenced by "barbarian" ideas, but destined to rejoin a Christian Roman world, as it was conceived since the fourth century. The Byzantines were reminded of this indelible hope whenever they entered their cathedral of St Sophia, heard liturgical affirmations of the empire's universality, and contemplated the imperial figures of Constantine and Justinian represented on the mosaic above the doors.

The tragic events of the thirteenth century seemed to have put an end to the dream. In 1204, Latin Crusaders sacked the "New Rome." A Frankish emperor sat on the throne of Constantine and a Venetian patriarch occupied the chair of Chrysostom and Photius. Furthermore, in 1240, the Mongols conquered Russia—the vast and promising missionary conquest

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in *High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by J. M. Raitt in collaboration with Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff. Copyright © 1987 by Crossroad Publishing Company, pp. 439-553. Reprinted by permission of The Crossroad Publishing Co., New York.

of Orthodox Byzantium—and the daughter-churches of Bulgaria and Serbia vacillated in their faithfulness to Orthodoxy. It appeared that Byzantine imperial universalism had been replaced for good by a Latin *orbis christianorum*, headed by the pope, facing alone both the Mongol empire and the Muslim Turks. For Eastern Christians, the only alternatives seemed to be the spiritual, political and cultural integration into Latin Christendom, or the power of Asiatic empires.

These momentous events and basic spiritual questions decisively influenced the Eastern Christian approach to eschatology and forced them to define their spiritual identity anew. Of course, in 1261 the city of Constantinople was recovered by the Greeks and, until 1453, weak Palaeologan emperors attempted to maintain the waning prestige of the "New Rome," but they could do so only symbolically. The real strength and resilience of Eastern Christianity were taken up by the church itself, within which positions of leadership were occupied by representatives of a strong monastic revival, associated with hesychasm.

### *The Hesychast Revival*

It has often been noticed that, in contrast with the West, the Christian East never developed religious *orders* which would exercise their ministry across diocesan borders, independently of local bishops. Indeed, Byzantine canon law required episcopal jurisdiction over all local monastic communities, and Byzantine monks rarely included in their rules educational or missionary tasks, which were characteristic of the more activist Latin orders, medieval and modern. But there were practical exceptions. For instance, the monastery of Studios, led by its great abbot St Theodore, had become, in the late eighth century, something of a "church within the church," with a very specific program for influencing society. Similarly, and on an ever wider scale, the movement most often designated as "hesychast" accomplished in the fourteenth century a widespread spiritual renewal throughout the Orthodox East. Its role can be compared, for example, with the Cluny reforms in the West. Although the ideological positions and the historical conditioning of the two movements were clearly different, a monastic leadership, progressively monopolizing hierarchical positions in the church, succeeded in both cases in establishing a set of priorities that placed spiritual values ahead of social and political contingencies.

The early history of "hesychasm" has been amply studied, as has its doctrinal expression, reflected in the theological writings of Gregory Palamas.<sup>2</sup> However, in order to understand fully the widespread spiritual influence of hesychasm, it is important to realize that the term can be used only in a very broad sense to designate the movement that concerns us here. Hesychasts, or contemplative hermits of Mount Athos, held that divine life is immediately accessible to those who live "in Christ," and the followers of this idea included lay theologians (such as Nicholas Cabasilas), political leaders, as well as ecclesiastics, who, as they reached the higher echelons of the ecclesiastical or civil hierarchies, could not be considered hermits or mystics in the usual sense of these words.<sup>3</sup> They were directly involved in the social, cultural, and political life of the time, pursuing concrete practical goals. But in these activities they had adopted common, and fundamentally spiritual, priorities, which explains their identity as a movement and the coherence of their activities.<sup>4</sup>

The decisions of the "Palamite" councils of 1341, 1347 and 1351 in Constantinople can be reduced to the basically simple affirmation that experience and knowledge of God are accessible *immediately* to all Christians; that the pursuit of such experience is an expression of the Christian faith itself; that faith is not an intellectual conjecture, but a vision of the Truth itself; that the sacramental life of the church is a necessary condition for authentic Christian experience. More technical theological problems, such as the Palamite distinction between divine essence and divine energies, were the terminological consequence, not the cause, of the experiential realism confirmed by the councils. The fact that such significant spiritual options were taken by the Byzantine Orthodox Church by the middle of the fifteenth century is certainly connected with a strong revival of monasticism and a renewed recognition of monastic spiritual leadership. The revival in turn was linked with the catastrophic events mentioned earlier: the empire

2 See J. Gribomont, "Monasticism and Asceticism. I, Eastern Christianity," and Kallistos Ware, "Ways of Prayer and Contemplation. I, Eastern," both in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, ed. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (World Spirituality 16; New York: Crossroad, 1985) pp. 86-112, 395-414. See also G. Mantzaridis, "Spiritual Life in Palamism", ch. 9 of *Christian Spirituality. High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by J. M. Raitt, in collaboration with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York, 1987), pp. 208-222.

3 On this, see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm* (London: Variorum, 1974), Introduction.

4 See the chapter "Victory of the Hesychasts in Byzantium: Ideological and political consequences" in Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, pp. 96-118.



and the cultural pride of Byzantium had been shattered by the Latin conquests and the Turkish challenge. There was no reliable anchor of salvation left except the Orthodox Church. But the church's strength was not seen in structures contingent to the empire, but rather in its eschatological, mystical, and ascetical traditions, maintained by the monks.

Around 1338, Gregory Palamas, in his *Triads* defending the hesychasts against the attacks of a south Italian "philosopher" Barlaam, provides a very symptomatic list of spiritual leaders, whom he and his disciples considered to be the models of the movement. Most prominent in the list are strong-willed and socially active bishops like Theoleptus of Philadelphia (1250-1321/26) and, particularly, Patriarch Athanasius I (1289-1293; 1303-1310). A stern and ascetic reformer, Athanasius, as patriarch, had paternalistically instructed Emperor Andronicus II on political matters, spent vast amounts on philanthropy, curbed self-serving church officials, and imposed discipline in monasteries.<sup>5</sup> Other patriarchs of Constantinople, especially in the period following the Palamite victory of 1347 (Isidore, Callistus, Philotheus), followed the example of Athanasius, at least in formal intent.

The priority of spiritual concerns characteristic of the hesychast movement manifested itself also in its opposition—traditional for Eastern monks—to humanistic interest in ancient Greek culture and philosophy. Not that Palamas and his disciples showed themselves to be systematic obscurantists. They did use philosophical language and concepts in their theological arguments, but they opposed the trends that began to understand Byzantium as a "Greek" state, in which Constantinople was seen as new "Athens." This emerging secular nationalism of the Byzantine intellectual elite—signalling the end of the Middle Ages—expressed itself politically in church-union attempts obtained through doctrinal surrender to Latin theology with the hope of obtaining cultural and political survival in return. Opposing such attempts, the hesychasts promoted new forms of Orthodox universalism. On Mount Athos, Greek, Slavic, Moldavian, Syrian and Georgian monks were molded together by a common spirituality and the adoption of common values. It was inevita-

<sup>5</sup> On Athanasius, see A. -M. Talbot, ed., *The Correspondence of Athanasius I* (Dumbarton Oaks Texts 3; Washington, DC, 1975); and J. Boonamra, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Study for the Patriarchate of Athanasios of Constantinople* (Thessaloniki: Analektra Vlatodon, 1982).

ble, therefore, that not only the patriarch of Constantinople selected from their midst but also Bulgarian patriarchs (St Euthymius), Serbian archbishops (St Sava), and metropolitans "of Kiev and all Russia" (St Cyprian) would promote in the entire Orthodox world a similar order of priorities. These included a liturgical unification on the basis of the *Ordo* ("Typikon") of St Sabbas of Palestine, a common faithfulness to the patriarchate of Constantinople (as well as the symbolic position of the emperor, as the "emperor of all Christians"), and a common attitude of reserve toward union with the papacy, whose promoters were motivated politically more than theologically.

Not unlike Cluny in the West in the eleventh century, Mount Athos was the unquestioned center of the monastic movement, although it had no formal disciplinary power beyond its borders. The "Holy Mountain," as it was called, was located in northern Greece. The entire territory of the peninsula belonged to numerous monastic communities, organized cenobitically, or in hermitages. Each community was governed by its own abbot, but all the monasteries recognized the authority of a single general abbot, known as *protos*. Both in the variety of monastic disciplines and in its general way of life, the Holy Mountain has survived until our own days.

From Athos, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, monasticism spread to the Balkans and Russia. This influence was carried out by traveling monks, as well as through books. Translations into Slavic were made on Athos, in Constantinople, or by Greek-speaking monks living in Serbia, Bulgaria, or Russia. The sheer volume of this new influx of Greek spiritual literature has led historians to speak of a "second" Byzantine, or south Slavic, influence on Russia (the first having followed immediately the "Baptism of the Rus" in 988). Most of the translations were works of Greek, sometimes Syrian, fathers of the classical patristic period, but also medieval Byzantine texts such as the Hymns of St Symeon the New Theologian (d. 1022) or the writings on prayer of fourteenth-century hesychasts. The more difficult and purely theological treatises, such as the works of Palamas, were beyond the grasp of most Slavic readers and were actually unnecessary, since the principles of hesychasm were not intellectually challenged among the Slavs. These remained untranslated. With the exception of hard theology, the average library of a Serbian, Bulgarian, or Russian monastery of that period was identical in content to that of a

Greek monastic house on Mount Athos, in Constantinople, on Patmos, or on Mount Sinai.

Perhaps the most spectacular development connected with the hesychast revival was the spread of monasticism in northern Russia. St Sergius of Radonezh (ca. 1314-1392) was the acknowledged father of this Northern Thebaid, as it began to be called. The "lavra" of the Trinity, founded by him to the northeast of Moscow, became the mother house of over 150 monasteries, established by disciples of Sergius throughout the northern forests in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Sergius himself could be referred to as a model by both the hermits and the partisans of community life.<sup>6</sup> His *Life*—the work of a disciple, Epiphanius the Wise, and an example of contemporary literary style—describes the beginning of his monastic life as one of "solitude" (*bezmolvie*, the Slavic equivalent of the Greek *hesychia*), during which, imitating the Egyptian fathers who lived with wild beasts, Sergius befriended a bear. The biographer always stresses the virtues of simplicity, humility and brotherly love which characterized Sergius and recounts a few examples of mystical experiences. In addition, his love of manual work and his organizational talents helped him to become—upon direct instruction from the patriarch of Constantinople—the founder of cenobitic life in his monastery. In the spirit of the Byzantine hesychasts, his contemporaries, Sergius became involved in the social and political life of the times. Sharing the views of Metropolitan Cyprian, a Bulgarian closely linked with the ecclesiastical leadership in Byzantium, he supported the unity of the church of Russia—whose dioceses were located throughout the bitterly feuding principalities of Moscow and Lithuania—and blessed Moscowite troops before their first victorious battle against the Mongols (1380).

The history of Russian monasticism of the period is, therefore, quite consistent with the monastic ideology in the Greek-speaking lands: the mystical and eschatological emphasis leads to a sense of spiritual independence from historical contingencies, but does not imply pietistic noninvolvement or indifference to history.

6 On Russian monasticism during that period, see particularly I. Smolitsch, *Russisches Mönchtum: Entstehung, Entwicklung und Wesen, 988-1917* (Würzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1953) pp. 79-100; also G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. 2, *The Middle Ages: The Thirteenth to the Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. J. Meyendorff (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966) pp. 195-264.

Another striking illustration of the contagious spiritual zeal of the period is a revival of missionary activities. Although only glimpses of the various contemporary actions of the patriarchate of Constantinople are known, the archives testify to the establishment of new dioceses in faraway Caucasus and in Valachia, the Romanian-speaking land north of the Danube. In the newly colonized Russian north, a disciple and friend of Sergius, St Stephen of Perm (1340-1396), having learned Greek, presided over the translation of Scripture and the liturgy into the language of a Finnish tribe, the Zyrians, for whom he also invented a special alphabet, before becoming their first bishop. Thus, the tradition of using native languages in missionary lands, exemplified by Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century, is still fully accepted in the practice of this late medieval period.

The picture of Eastern Christian spirituality in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would be incomplete without a mention, at least, of the developments in the field of art, which parallel the intellectual and spiritual movements of the period.

Characterizing the work of Greek artists during the so-called Palaeologan "renaissance," André Grabar writes: "We see them foreshadowing the discoveries of Cavallini and Giotto, and at the same time those of the Italian painters of the fifteenth century who will revive the great style of classical painting."<sup>7</sup> Anyone familiar with the monuments of Christian art of the thirteenth, fourteen, and fifteenth centuries, as they developed in Byzantium and the Slavic lands, is aware of their innovating style, their new sense of movement, and their closeness to life, which stand in clear contrast to the more solemn and more severe Byzantine art of the tenth or eleventh centuries.

Some modern authors have attempted to establish a direct link between the spiritual renewal spurred by hesychasm and these artistic developments. Others, on the contrary, consider that the monastic asceticism had a stifling effect on art and that the Palaeologan "renaissance" reflects the new interest in classical antiquity shown by Byzantine humanists. But can either side of this simplified dilemma explain an art that was basically Christian and often monastic, without ever really becoming a "renaissance" art? Moreover, whereas the influence of antiquity is undeniable in

7 André Grabar, "The artistic climate in Byzantium during the Palaeologan period," in *The Kariye Djami*, ed. P. A. Underwood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 4:7-8.

many specific cases—such as the famous monastery of the Chora (Kariye Djami) in Constantinople—there is no reason to believe that such an interest could have motivated the Slavic patrons and artists of Macedonia, or the extraordinary achievements of the great Andrei Rublev in distant Muscovy. It is therefore more likely that the artistic revival, which originated in a politically moribund Byzantium and spread among Orthodox Slavs, was an expression of the new awareness that communion with God was *possible*, that it depended on a human response to divine grace, that the Greek sense of the *humanum*, inherited from antiquity, was not suppressed but rather renewed and transfigured by the Christian experience. Thus, the message of the artistic revival reflected a Christian spirituality that, since its victory over iconoclasm, had learned to express itself in images and colors as well as in words or concepts, and which concerned not only a disincarnated human spirit but the totality of human existence, assumed by God in Jesus Christ.

### *East and West: The Gradual Divorce*

All modern historians agree on one negative point: the schisms between Rome and Byzantium, the two centers of Christendom in the High Middle Ages, cannot be associated with one particular event, or even with a precise date. It was, rather, a progressive divorce—an “estrangement,” according to Yves Congar—which began with theological tensions during the period of the ecumenical councils and the development of a different understanding of the role of authority in the church. The two halves of Christendom broke communion with each other on several occasions, but were eventually reconciled, until the relatively minor incident of 1054 became *de facto* a final break between Rome and Constantinople. This does not mean that either side considered that reconciliation was impossible, but the two visions of the church were clearly moving in different directions. With the Gregorian reformation, the Crusades, the “imperial” papacy of Innocent III, the rise of Scholasticism and the universities, and, in the fourteenth century, the various intellectual trends that culminated in conciliarism and the Great Schism of the West, Latin Christendom considered itself to be a self-sufficient model of unity. The East, meanwhile, remained quite allergic to the institutional developments of the West, particularly to the centralized papacy, whereas the monastic theology triumphant in Byzantium in the

fourteenth century emphasized the experiential, mystical and eschatological elements of the Christian faith rather than the legal and the rational principles that dominated the ecclesial institutions and the schools of the West.

Theologians on both sides were primarily preoccupied with polemics around the issue of the Creed of Nicea-Constantinople. Its original text, which affirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeded “from the Father” (cf. John 15:26), had been interpolated in the Latin West with the famous word *filioque*, so that Western Christians confessed the “double” procession of the Spirit “from the Father and the Son.” Whatever the original purpose of the interpolation (which began, most probably, in seventh-century Spain), its apologists were justifying it by references to the Trinitarian doctrine of Augustine, who had emphasized the essential unity of the Godhead, so that the Father and the Son, being one in essence, constituted only one source of the Spirit. In the East, meanwhile, the normative conception of the divine Trinity was that of the Cappadocian Fathers: St Basil and his friends (fourth century). For them, the personal, or *hypostatic*, identity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit constituted the primary Christian revelation and experience, whereas the common divine essence was in itself transcendent and unknown, being manifested only through energies.<sup>8</sup> Behind the issue of the *filioque* stood, therefore, a divergence in the understanding of God. The two conceptions—the Cappadocian and the Augustinian—had direct implications for Christian spirituality.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the addition of the *filioque* to a common Creed, approved by ecumenical councils, had been effected unilaterally and raised the problem of church authority. Although it had occurred spontaneously, and,

8 On this issue, see Thomas Hopko, “The Trinity. I, The Trinity in the Cappadocians,” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, 260–76; see also G. Mantzaridis, “Spiritual Life in Palamism”, ch. 9 of *Christian Spirituality. High Middle Ages and Reformation*, edited by J. M. Raitt, in collaboration with B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York, 1987), pp. 208–222.

9 The polarity between the two conceptions has been well established since the work of T. de Régnon, *Etudes de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (Paris, 1893). For recent debate on the importance of the issue, see K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (London: Burns & Oates, 1969); and D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1981). They had coexisted within Christendom until the debate on the interpolation focused polemical attention upon their divergence.



perhaps, through a misunderstanding, in remote areas of the Latin Christian world, its acceptance by the bishops of Rome in the eleventh century added a new dimension to the issue. Was the pope, in virtue of his Petrine authority, entitled to modify the ecumenical Creed by himself?

The doctrinal issue of the *filioque*, as seen by the East, became, therefore, the touchstone of a debate involving the question of papal authority—which, of course, manifested itself in many other ways, including the sanction given by Pope Innocent III of the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders (1204) and the appointment of a Latin patriarch in the imperial city. A central issue of Christian experience was coming to the fore: Was the faith dependent upon an absolute and legally defined institutional criterion, such as the papacy? Could this criterion be trusted over and above the councils, the fathers, and, ultimately, that *knowledge* of God which, as the hesychasts were showing, belonged to every Christian within the sacramental body of the church? Did Christ give formal and absolute authority to the apostle Peter, and was this authority transmitted exclusively to the bishops of Rome? The East had always recognized a certain moral authority and a certain responsibility of the popes, and had counted on them to assure a world consensus on controversial issues, but the medieval, post-Gregorian papacy was formulating its powers in radically new ways. Beyond the political and cultural clashes of the times, two perceptions of the church emerged: in the one, the church was a God-sanctioned custodian of order and truth, demanding obedience to a visible head; in the other, order and visible unity, which earlier had been secured by the obviously fallible but practically useful power of the Christian emperors, now, with the collapse of the empire, was seen more as a mystical communion within which sacramental order and doctrinal integrity could be secured, as in the early centuries of Christianity, only through a consensus involving both the episcopate and the people.

The contrast could be observed throughout the many contacts and debates of the period. It could also be seen in the way three main Petrine texts of the New Testament (Mt 16:18-19; Lk 22:32; Jn 21:15-17) were understood. The Roman tradition of seeing the words of Christ addressed to Peter as applicable exclusively to the bishop of Rome was now accepted as obvious by the entire West. In the East, the Petrine passages were quite

generally understood in the context of the life of each local church or even the individual faithful. For instance, Origen (third century) had seen in Peter the model of every believer: the faith makes “stones” (*petrai*) out of every Christian, who also receives the keys of the kingdom of heaven to enter therein.<sup>10</sup> More often, in the patristic tradition, Peter is seen as the first “bishop,” entrusted with teaching and feeding the flock of his local community, as head and president of the eucharistic assembly. This tradition, expressed in the third century by Cyprian of Carthage, was based on the idea that in every “catholic” church the bishop sitting on the “the chair of Peter” presides over the faithful. It was still in Byzantium the accepted ecclesiological model. The presence of the body of St Peter in Rome where he died, made Rome into a popular pilgrimage center and contributed to its moral prestige, but the spiritual presence of “Peter” was also an experiential reality in every church, embodied in the ministry of the local bishop. In their polemics against papal claims, the Byzantine authors of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries do not deny the particular and, indeed, exclusive position of Peter among the apostles, but they challenge the idea of an *exclusive* succession of Peter in Rome alone. Thus, Neilos Cabasilas, a bishop of Thessalonica in the fourteenth century, wrote:

Peter indeed is both apostle and leader of the apostles, but the pope is neither an apostle (for the apostles appointed pastors and teachers, not other apostles), nor leader of the apostles. Peter is the teacher of the entire universe..., whereas the pope is only bishop of Rome.<sup>11</sup>

The repeated attempts at negotiating church union were initiated by the Byzantine emperors, seeking the military and political support of the West against the Muslim threat. The attempts were welcomed by the popes, who nevertheless insisted upon the formal and definitive acceptance of both the doctrinal position and the ecclesial structure of Latin Christendom. Opposition generally came from churchmen in both Greek and Slavic lands, who demanded that union be not a simple surrender, but that it be discussed at an open and free council of the two churches. A totally new situation, which broke the deadlock, was created by the triumph of “conciliarism” in the West. Under the impact of the Great Schism, which from 1378 on opposed popes to antipopes, the superior

<sup>10</sup> *Homilies on Matthew* 12.10, ed. Klostermann; GCS 38. (Leipzig, 1935), pp. 85-89 (PG 13, cols. 997-1104).

<sup>11</sup> PG 149, cols. 704D-705A.

authority of ecumenical councils over the papacy was accepted at Constance (1414-1418). Pope Martin V, the pope whose election united the warring parties of the West, endorsed the decree *Frequens*, which made the papacy responsible before a council meeting at regular intervals. This also made possible the only authentic and representative attempt at holding an ecumenical council that would include, as in the first millennium of Christian history, the delegates of both the Eastern and Western churches.

The meeting of the council successively in two Italian cities, Ferrara and Florence (1438-1440), resulted from a major papal concession to the Eastern ecclesiological perspective. Until then, the popes considered that the differences between East and West were nonnegotiable, and that the East had no alternative other than to accept the faith of the see of Peter and papal authority as it existed in the West. At Ferrara-Florence, the two parties met without preconditions; indeed, the Latin church accepted that the council be considered the "Eighth," that is, that it be seen as a continuation of the common tradition that was last expressed in Nicea in 787, at the "Seventh" council, which condemned iconoclasm. The Western theological and ecclesiological developments that had intervened between 787 and 1438 were thus implicitly put into question.

This important initial advantage for the cause of union, however, was not used properly during the long debates in Ferrara and in Florence. The spiritual gap between the two worlds and the different theological methodologies made mutual understanding difficult.

The Latin position at the council was presented and defended by heirs of Latin Scholasticism, who used not only the authority of tradition but also philosophical arguments in a way that was quite unfamiliar to the Orthodox Byzantines. "Why Aristotle, Aristotle? No good, Aristotle," mumbled a bewildered delegate from distant Georgia, as Dominican John of Torquemada was debating a fine point of theology.<sup>12</sup> The long discussion on the issue of purgatory was another example illustrating the different approaches to basic Christian experience. Although the two sides agreed on the possibility and the necessity of praying for the dead, they understood differently the nature of "purification" required of dead souls.

<sup>12</sup> The incident is reported in the memoirs of a Greek delegate, Sylvester Syropoulos; see V. Lauvent, *Les "Mémoires" de Sylvestre Syropoulos sur le concile de Florence* (Paris: CNRS, 1971), p. 464.

The legalistic view defended by the Latins insisted that divine justice needed satisfaction for sins committed for which appropriate penance had not been performed. This clashed with the Greek notion, inherited from Gregory of Nyssa, that communion with God is an endless growth in purity and that this growth, which is the purpose of spiritual life, indeed continues even after death.

But the Eastern delegation at Florence was not united. Whereas the larger number of delegates, ill-prepared for theological debate per se, was dominated by the desire to escape the Turkish menace, the intellectual spokesmen belonged to two distinct groups, which were polarized even before the debates started.

Mark Eugenicus, metropolitan of Ephesus, represented the monastic, or hesychast, revival. He conceived Christian truth as fully revealed and experienced, and the Orthodox church was naturally for him the locus of that experience. In his priorities, the faith stood clearly above political expediency, and the survival of Byzantium from the forthcoming Turkish onslaught was not a sufficient price for compromise in doctrine. He was not a fanatic, however. Sincerely involved in the union negotiation and—perhaps naively—hoping to persuade the Latins that truth lived in Orthodoxy, he delivered the official eulogy of Pope Eugenius IV at his delegation's arrival at Ferrara.

The other Greek party, best represented by Bessarion, metropolitan of Nicea, stood in line with the thought of Barlaam the Calabrian, who a century earlier was the adversary of Gregory Palamas. Suspicious of monastic mysticism, Bessarion's party was passionately devoted to the thought and cultural achievements of Greek antiquity. For Bessarion, Christian revelation itself was inseparable from its incarnation in Greek Christian philosophy, and he could not conceive of the survival of Christianity under the yoke of Islam. Furthermore, the philosophical revival of Latin Scholasticism, as well as the admiration for all things Greek which he discovered in Renaissance Italy, convinced him that salvation could come only from the West, the *filiogue* notwithstanding. Bessarion's views were shared by others, including particularly the metropolitan "of Kiev and all Russia," Isidore.

The eventual acceptance of a union formula by Bessarion and Isidore at the urgings of the emperor led most of the psychologically exhausted

Greek delegates to sign the document as well. Mark alone refused. The decree of union endorsed the Western views of the *\*filioque* issue: the Holy Spirit was defined as proceeding from the Father and the Son "as from one origin" (*sicut ab uno principio*), and the interpolation of the Creed was proclaimed as "legitimate." The decree further endorsed the Western doctrine of purgatory and, last but not least, proclaimed the pope to be truly "vicar of Christ," possessing "full power" (*plena potestas*) in governing and feeding the universal church. This last term was crucial as a code word signifying the end of Western conciliarism; the council of Florence was, in fact, rejecting the regime approved at Constance, which made the pope responsible to a regularly convened council.

Thus, according to the most recent and, in general, most positive evaluation of the council of Florence, the stated goal of that assembly—the unity of East and West—was missed, and practically the entire East stood behind the rejection voiced by Mark of Ephesus.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, on the two issues of purgatory and papal authority, the council's decree marked not only the rejection of conciliarism but also the adoption of a theology that, a century later, would provide Martin Luther with his major reasons for opposing and rejecting the medieval Latin ecclesial system. Conceived as a major attempt at restoring Christian unity, the council ended up sowing the seed for further schisms.

### *The East Enters Its Dark Ages*

Politically motivated and lacking that theological openness which was a necessary condition of true dialogue, the union attempts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries left the gap wide open between East and West. Possibly the result would have been different if the encounter had involved not only ecclesiastical politicians and scholastic theologians but more representatives of the authentic spiritual traditions—for example, in the West, the followers of Franciscan spirituality or of the school of Rhineland mysticism. It is interesting to note that recent archaeological discoveries have uncovered frescoes of St Francis in a Greek church in Constantinople, and that archaeological evidence in Ferrara has identified Italian hermits who, attending the debates of the council of Florence,

13 J. Gill, *The Council of Florence* (Oxford: University Press, 1959), p. vii.

were formally rebuked by representatives of the papal curia because they expressed sympathy for the positions of the Greeks.<sup>14</sup> This obscure information may still be a distant anticipation of the extraordinary interest, expressed by so many in the contemporary West, in the spirituality of fourteenth-century Eastern monasticism. This interest is reciprocated, for example, in the sympathetic research of the Orthodox Palamite theologian Vladimir Lossky on Meister Eckhart.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of such potential opportunities, the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453 put an end to most direct contacts between the Christians of East and West. The West entered a period of brilliant cultural activity, but also faced incipient secularization; it undertook a remarkable missionary expansion, but suffered the tragedy of further schisms. Looking back at the history of the Renaissance and post-Renaissance periods in the West, we discover today how much Western Christendom was missing the spirituality, the ecclesiology, and the theology of the East to balance some of its more one-sided options. The Greek East, meanwhile, was forced to renounce intellectual progress and to settle within ghettoized communities in a struggle for mere survival in a Islam-dominated society. It is doubtful that the survival would have been possible without the extraordinary richness of the Byzantine liturgical experience and without the spiritual leadership, still quite alive in monasteries, provided by the followers of the hesychast revival of the fourteenth century. Russia alone soon began its development as a Eurasian Christian empire, but its church, until the nineteenth century, also remained as dependent upon the Byzantine medieval traditions for its spiritual life as the Greeks and the Balkan Slavs. Thus, Western spirituality lost much of its Eastern roots, whereas the East remained aloof and distant from events that shaped modern times.

14 C. L. Striker and Y. K. Kuban, "Work at Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul, Second Preliminary Report," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22 (1968) pp. 185-93, pls. 23-26. The frescoes were probably painted during the Latin occupation (1204-1261), but they were preserved after the return of the Greeks. See also V. Lauvent, *Les "Mémoires" de Sylvestre Syropoulos*, p. 342.

15 V. Lossky, *Théologie négative et connaissance de Dieu chez Maître Eckhart* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1960).

## An Early Medieval Bridge-BUILDER: Remarks on Eastern Patristic Thought in John Scot Eriugena

The bifurcation between the Eastern and the Western theological approaches to the Christian faith did not occur instantly or through anyone's specific bad will. It was a long and slow process of estrangement. Even the schism itself between the churches cannot be dated with precision. It did not occur as other schisms *within* Eastern Christianity (e.g., the christological conflict between supporters and critics of the Council of Chalcedon), or *within* Western Christianity (as the Reformation of the sixteenth century). In those cases, theologians of similar training and similar background disagreed on specific formulae or specific doctrines. East and West, on the contrary, developed different visions, different perceptions, *long before* they clashed on specific points, such as the *filioque*, or the issue of Rome's authority. When these—and a few other—specific conflicts occurred, it is the lack of a deeper, common vision which made solutions difficult.

In order to prevent the different visions and perceptions from becoming one-sided and therefore divisive, as they eventually did, constant watchfulness, concern for communication and dialogue between East and West would have been needed. Such concerns did actually exist, but only in the cases of *some* major figures. In the West, Hilary and Ambrose knew Greek, and cherished connections with Eastern theologians, although, by inclination and method, they anticipated the later Latin approach to the Trinity. St Augustine knew less Greek. It is only by using his own creative genius that he conceived his own philosophical interpretation of Christianity. His thought shaped Western Christendom in its distinctiveness, but nothing was further from Augustine's mind than the conscious creation of a separate tradition, distinct from the Eastern one. Dominating all his Latin contemporaries intellectually, he was convinced that he was defend-

ing and expressing the catholic faith common to East and West. And he really did so, in so many ways. But he was not capable of discerning the importance of the lonely voice of Cassian and the monks of Lérins, who—in the name of the East—were raising doubts about some of his positions in the anti-pelagian polemics...

In the East, St Basil of Caesarea had made unsuccessful but dedicated efforts to gain pope Damasus and the Western bishops to his understanding of the Trinitarian faith which made possible the triumph of Nicea in the East. A few decades later, the council of Chalcedon recognized the common-sense wisdom of the *Tome* of St Leo for the solution of the christological dilemma, in spite of terminological difficulties. And the great Maximus the Confessor established his solid partnership with pope Martin in the seventh century while fighting Monotheletism. However, at the time of Maximus, the intellectual, spiritual and linguistic gap is already in evidence: Maximus lived in Africa perhaps for two entire decades, but in his voluminous writings, there is not a single reference to Augustine, and there is no evidence that he knew any Latin. Similarly, St Gregory the Great, a papal representative in Constantinople for seven years (579-586) and firmly dedicated to catholic unity between East and West, knew no Greek.<sup>1</sup> These were the great bridge-builders for several centuries.

The gradual estrangement did not, therefore, exclude much good will on both sides; but the good will of a few individuals was insufficient to fill the cultural and intellectual gap which history was creating between the sophisticated and conservative tradition of Orthodox Byzantium on the one hand, and the fresh dynamism of "barbarian" Europe in the Carolingian age on the other. The political antagonism of Charlemagne himself against Byzantium added a new dimension to mutual ignorance on the intellectual level: the anti-Greek polemics of the *Caroline Books* initiated the fateful controversy on the *filioque* addition. This controversy flared up again during the struggle between pope Nicholas I and patriarch Photius, in the fifties and sixties of the ninth century, precisely at the time when John Scot was active and the court of Charles the Bald, translating the works of Pseudo-Dionysius.

<sup>1</sup> An attempt to show that he might have known *some* Greek was recently made by Joan M. Petersen, "Did Gregory the Great Know Greek?", in Baker, D., ed., *The Orthodox Churches and the West* (Studies in Church History 13, Oxford, 1976), pp. 121-34.

But even this time of crisis did not lack people of good will. The attitude towards the West adopted by patriarch Photius, the greatest of Byzantine scholars, is a case in point. In his major work refuting the Latin doctrine of the "double procession" of the Spirit, he shows awareness of the fact that his Latin adversaries invoke texts by Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine in favor of the *filioque*. His reaction is characteristic: one should not deny the authority of Latin fathers, but hide their individual mistakes by "covering their nudity," as the good sons of Noah did.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, he shows ignorance of the Latin tradition as a whole, except for some information which reached him probably through hearsay. In his famous *Bibliotheca*, he discusses the question of the *sin of nature*, which he considers as a heresy introduced by a mysterious author whom he calls *Aram*, and who is obviously none other than St Jerome, although the learned patriarch fails to identify "Aram" with the saint venerated universally, and whose authority he invokes himself elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> And he obviously has no knowledge at all of the real role of Augustine in shaping Western views on nature, sin and grace.

Against this background of mutual ignorance, the appearance of a person like Eriugena is truly extraordinary. His enthusiasm for Greek thought and philosophical vocabulary, and his belief in their superiority over the Latin understanding and language, could have been partly a matter of self-promotion, since he was the only available translator of Greek texts. Indeed, in his preamble to the translation of the *Areopagitica*, he praises Charles the Bald for "waking up" sleeping Latin scholars by calling them to the "purest and most numerous Greek sources" (*ad purissimos copiosissimosque Graium latices*),<sup>4</sup> of which he—John Scot—was the interpreter.

He was aware of the *filioque* controversy, which was embarrassing for him. His contemporaries, Ratramnus of Corbie and Aeneas of Paris were composing polemical treatises against his beloved Greeks on that particular topic. Not willing to take sides too formally, he clearly recognizes that the Greek position is based on the original version of the Creed, and that the addition

<sup>2</sup> *On the Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, PG 102, cols. 349-352.

<sup>3</sup> *Bibliotheca*, codex 177; ed. R. Henry (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1960), II, p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Praef. ad vers. Dionysii*, PL 122, col. 1031 C. In his preface to the translation of St Maximus, he exalts Charles for seeking "sane doctrine" among the Greeks (*ex praeclarissimis Graecorum fontibus*, col. 1196 B).



provoked an unnecessary controversy: "Perhaps the reason why it is declared by the Nicene synod," he writes, "that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone is to prevent public discussion of such a subject."<sup>5</sup> In the ninth century, the interpolated Creed was in use throughout Carolingian Europe—but not in Rome—so John Scot accepts the Latin text, but regrets that one cannot consult the (anonymous) Latin fathers who introduced the interpolation to ask them why they did it.<sup>6</sup> He recognizes that there are Scriptural prooftexts favoring the double procession of the Holy Spirit, and is aware of the recognition, by the Greek side, of the formula *per Filium* (procession of the Spirit from the Father *through* the Son). But when he comes to a detailed discussion of the theological issue itself, he sides with the Greek position. Asked by the *Alumnus* "whether it is from the essence (οὐσία) or from the substance (ὕπόστασις) of the Father that the Son is born and the Holy Spirit proceeds," he refers specifically to the real difference accepted by the Greek fathers between the common οὐσία and the particular ὑπόστασις and unambiguously affirms that the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are to be attributed to the *substantia* (ὕπόστασις) of the Father alone.<sup>7</sup> This is actually the most fundamental point maintained by Photius, and by all Eastern theologians ever since.

This position of Eriugena illustrates how deliberate was his dedication to the cause of finding the authentic Christian truth in Greek sources. Of course, at no point is he ready to discard his own Western tradition, and particularly St Augustine. Thus, he introduces the Augustinian psychological image in his discussion of the procession of the Spirit,<sup>8</sup> but this attempt of his stands rather peripherally in his overall conception of the

5. *Periphyseon* II, col. 611 D (tr. John O'Meara, Montreal-Washington, 1987, p. 223). Eriugena refers to the source of his knowledge of the original text of the Creed: the *Ancoratus* "on the faith" by St Epiphanius of Cyprus (*Ibid.*, col. 601C; tr. p. 211). He obviously had no contacts with contemporary Orthodox Greeks. The text of the *Ancoratus* is in PG 43, cols. 17-236.

6. *Ibid.*, col. 612 B (tr. p. 224).

7. *Ibid.*, cols. 613 A - 615 C (tr. pp. 225-8); cf. a good discussion of Eriugena's position on the *filioque* issue in A. Brilliantov, *Vliianie Vostochnago bogosloviia na Zapadnoe v proizvedeniakh Ioanna Skota Eriugeny* ("The influence of Eastern theology upon the Western in the writings of John Scot Eriugena") (St Petersburg, 1898), pp. 275-280.

8. Cf. his discussion of the relations between mind (*mens*), knowledge of itself (*notitia sui*) and love (*amor*) as a Trinitarian image. *Ibid.*, col. 610B-611A (tr. pp. 222-3). The later Byzantine theological tradition would actually use the image, within its own context, as well (see Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters. A Critical Edition, Translation and Study*, by Robert E. Sinkewicz [Toronto, 1988], pp. 123-5).

Trinitarian problem, which basically relies upon his reading of Greek authors: the two Gregories and Maximus the Confessor.

Thus, Eriugena was able to take the side of the East on the particular issue of the procession of the Spirit which, he knew, was already in his time a matter of controversy between East and West. What is it, then, which led him to that position? What did he discover in the Greek fathers which allowed him to take some distance from the teachings of St Augustine—not only, as we know, in the area of Trinitarian theology, but even more definitely on other central philosophical and theological issues—although St Augustine was for him, as for the entire Latin Christian world, the theological teacher *par excellence*?



Quite symptomatically, in his early treatise, *On predestination*, composed by request of Hincmar of Rheims to refute the doctrine of double predestination proclaimed by Gottschalk, Eriugena already affirms the theocentric monism which will be at the heart of his system in the *Periphyseon*. He argues that in God there is no difference between predestination and fore-knowledge. God, therefore, cannot be the cause of any evil or punishment. The evil-doers are themselves their own punishment, because they separate themselves from God on their own volition. No Eastern fathers are referred to in this context, only Augustine, with the characteristic explanation that the passages where Augustine *does* allude to double-predestination and *does* affirm divine retribution to the sinners are pedagogical teachings for the unlearned, not the intimate circle, endowed with true spiritual knowledge of the mysteries.

Therefore Eriugena, as he begins his translations of the *Areopagitica* of St Maximus and St Gregory of Nyssa, has already taken a positive stand towards neoplatonic monism. And it is this monism that he searches for in Greek patristics, or at least in the authors which were accessible to him. He then develops it into a philosophical system found in the *Periphyseon*. He must have realized that Neoplatonism had helped Augustine to overcome (at least partially) the Manicheism of his youth, but in the Greek authors he discovered an interpretation of the Christian faith in which the neoplatonic scheme of procession and return was even more widely used, with varied degrees of consistency, to express and interpret the biblical conceptions of creation, salvation and restoration.

Thus, in St Gregory of Nyssa Eriugena found what today we call "theocentric anthropology." The doctrine of the image of God is understood by Gregory as the necessary presence of a "divine spark" in humanity, which makes it impossible to understand human nature without reference to God. It is this divine presence which makes human beings truly *human*, so that a fall from God is a form of suicide. God is the fullness of goodness (πλήρωμα τῶν ἀγαθῶν τὸ θεῖον) and the only source of goodness for humanity.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the divine image, although it is eminently present in the human νοῦς, which is called to control and to "reign over" the rest of the human being (and the created world in general), is not truly realizable in a human individual, but in all of humanity together (ἅπαν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον) restored in God. Indeed, the "fullness of goodness" can only belong to the fullness of humanity (τὸ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος πλήρωμα).<sup>10</sup> The doctrine of the image of God thus serves as the ontological basis for the doctrine of the universal restoration, or *apokatastasis*. In his entire approach, Gregory uses the doctrine of the image of God in humanity to explain *human nature*, and not, as Augustine did, to learn about the absolute God from His finite reflection in humanity.

What Eriugena finds in Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor is a vision of the original humanity in paradise, as a purely spiritual nature in communion with God. To that state, humanity is called to return through the process of deification, because relations between God and the world, and among all existing things, are not conceived as external contacts between self-subsisting entities, but as mutual participation. For Eriugena, "Everything that is, is either participant, or participated, or participation, or [both] participated *and* participant at once."<sup>11</sup> There is no opposition between "nature" and "grace," because "every perfect creature *consists* of nature and grace."<sup>12</sup> It is also in the writings of Gregory and Maximus—not to mention the *Areopagitica*—that Eriugena found constant references to *theosis*, or "deification," expressing the goal of Christian life. "This use of this word, Deification, is very rare in the Latin books," he bemoans,

<sup>9</sup> *De opif. hominis* 16 (PG 44, col. 184).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 185.

<sup>11</sup> *Periphyseon* III, col. 630 A (tr. p. 246).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 631 D (tr. p. 248).

...I am not sure of the reason for this reticence: perhaps it is because the meaning of this word *theosis* (the term which the Greeks usually employ in the sense of the psychic and bodily transformation of the saints into God so as to become One in Him and with Him, when there will remain in them nothing of their animal, earthly and moral nature) seemed too profound for those who cannot rise above carnal speculations, and would therefore be to them incomprehensible and incredible...<sup>13</sup>

What Eriugena also found in Gregory of Nyssa is a specific, neoplatonizing interpretation of *theosis*, with a strong sense of incompatibility between participation in divine life and all forms of materiality and animality. This applies particularly to the conception of humanity before the Fall and the ultimate return to that glorious state of "angelic" life in God. The problem here resides not in the very fact of a spiritual, transfigured existence which was prepared by God for Adam and Eve in paradise, and is the future hope of Christians in heaven, *but in the nature* of this transfiguration. What is involved is not only the nature of matter and materiality, including human bodies, which are seen as a "concourse of accidents,"<sup>14</sup> and have no substance except on the intelligible plane, but whether visible, historical existence, human achievement and creativity in *this* world has any permanent value; or whether the entire "process" out of God, has no other goal and meaning than its ultimate return to exactly the same point *in God* from where it originally proceeded. The issue of human gender is the most obvious case in point, and the best illustration of the problem. Eriugena adopts from Gregory of Nyssa the notion that the gender distinction was originally created by God only *in view of* the forthcoming fall. For Gregory, man and woman possessed, in paradise, another "angelic" method of reproduction, foreign to animality.<sup>15</sup> Eriugena goes further. For him, the *Genesis* account of creation and the Fall does not involve time at all, so there is no need to speculate on the matter: "When we say 'before and after sin,' we are demonstrating the multiplicity of our thought processes which is due to the fact that we are still subject to temporal conditions: but to God the foreknowledge of sin and the consequence of sin itself are contemporaneous."<sup>16</sup> The problem therefore is not only with sexual animality, but with the value of human

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, V, col. 1015 C (tr. p. 706).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, col. 502A (tr. p. 96).

<sup>15</sup> For a recent discussion of this view, see V. E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," *The Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, 41, 2 (October 1990), pp. 441-471.

<sup>16</sup> *Periphyseon* IV, col. 808 AB (tr. pp. 460-1).

qualities and achievements *in time and history*. According to traditional teaching, those who despised marriage were condemned by the Church. Indeed, the use of Eph 5 to justify the existence of a *sacrament* of marriage implies that the gender distinction has a content and a dimension transcending animality, that it belongs to human nature—not only to its fallen state—and that it will be maintained in the eschatological Kingdom... But, beyond the specific issue of gender, the neoplatonic understanding of deification deprives human activity, human creativity, and therefore the exercise of human *freedom* in *this* world, of any ontological meaning. Paradoxically, neoplatonic monism, which denies an ontology of evil, and manichean dualism, which affirms it, coincide in their practically negative approach to the realities of history in the fallen world.

Finally, Eriugena also invokes the Greek fathers to justify his understanding of the doctrine of divine ideas and creation, particularly the book *On the Divine Names* of Dionysius; and he uses the Dionysian terminology to describe his overall conception of the relationship between the transcendent uncreated Mind of God, and created realities. It is on this point that his basic monistic philosophy appears most clearly. God creates “from nothing,” but, according to the apophatic theology of Dionysius, God Himself “is nothing,” because He is “superessential” (ὑπερουσίος). It is therefore possible, and even necessary, to say that God creates out of Himself. Indeed, God is an absolute Intellect, who cannot be perceived through any category of cognition, but whose eternal ideas constitute the very reality of all being. Relative to God, these ideas are “created and creating nature.” Relative to visible, perceptible realities, divine ideas are eternal, and, in that sense, uncreated. There is, therefore, a basic contradiction in Eriugena’s view of creation, and he himself recognizes his inability to solve the dilemma created by his initial premise, that there is *being* only through participation in the *Being*:

If all things that are, are eternal in the creative Wisdom, how are they made out of nothing? For how can that be eternal which before it was made was not, or how can that which begins to be in time [and with time] be in eternity? For nothing that participates in eternity either begins to be or desists from being, whereas that which was not and begins to be will of necessity desist from being what it is. For nothing that is not without a beginning can be without an end. Therefore I cannot discover how these opinions do not contradict each other.<sup>17</sup>

17 *Ibid.* III, col. 636 AD (tr. p. 253).

In any case, and in spite of his honest acknowledgment of the difficulty, Eriugena’s own conviction is not only that creation is, indeed, an eternal act, inherent to the divine being, but that there is ontological continuity between God and creatures:

We should not understand God and the creature as two things removed from one another, but *as one and the same thing*. For the creature subsists in God, and *God is created in the creature* in a wonderful and ineffable way, making Himself manifest, invisible making himself more visible.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, for Eriugena, the creative act consists in making eternal divine ideas perceptible and visible. In God’s simple being, there is no difference between volition and vision. So creatures are not other than *theophanies*, and “it is from Himself that God takes the occasions of His theophanies...since all things are from Him and through Him and in Him and for Him.”<sup>19</sup>

Before an audience of specialists, I did not dare to present anything but a few examples of how Eriugena uses the Eastern patristic tradition, and how references to the *Areopagite*, to Gregory of Nyssa and to Maximus fit into his own original philosophical system. A discussion of how he made his selections and how he used the particular views of some Eastern fathers should lead to an interesting discussion, not only about Eriugena, but also about the Eastern Christian tradition itself. For Eriugena did not use Greek patristic authors simply to find prooftexts: he did understand and adopt for himself the internal logic of Christian Neoplatonism, without however giving full credit to the overall context of doctrinal development in the East, where the neoplatonic vision of reality was always in process of being qualified, critically modified, and channeled through the mainstream of a Christian tradition, defined in terms of Trinitarian and christological criteria.

In the Greek fathers, Eriugena discovered what indeed constitutes a justified common ground between Christianity and Neoplatonism—that which is broadly referred to today as “theocentric anthropology.” The human being simply does not exist as “pure nature”—independent and autonomous from divine presence—and that communion with God is not a mystical *donum superadditum*, but a constitutive element of true

18 *Ibid.* III, col. 678 C (tr. p. 305).

19 *Ibid.* III, col. 679 A (tr. p. 305).



humanity, as it was originally created and as it is destined to be restored in the eschatological kingdom. This is a conception quite common in the East since Irenaeus, and it provides the general context for the interpretation of Genesis 1:26 on the creation of man and woman in the "image and likeness" of God. However, in Greek patristics, there was not only Neoplatonism. Side by side, and often in close conjunction with the neoplatonizing authors, who tended to identify the "image" with the intellect (νοῦς), there was also a monastic literature which developed a conception of the *heart*, as the "meadow of the Spirit." Maintaining more closely than the neoplatonists a vision of the human being as a psychosomatic whole, this conception remained more biblical, and also more Trinitarian, in its spirituality, because of its pneumatological dimension. If Eriugena had broader access to the theology of the Cappadocian Fathers, he would have experienced more difficulty in using them as he did, within an exclusively neoplatonic—and therefore somewhat biased—context. As a case in point, one can refer to the parallelism established by Werner Jaeger between Gregory of Nyssa and the writings attributed to Macarius the Great<sup>20</sup>—a parallelism which is not so apparent in Gregory's treatise *On the Creation of Man*, translated by Eriugena, but which is quite significant for the more general understanding of anthropology not only in Gregory, but certainly also in Basil. In any case, the common neoplatonic background of both Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus—which made those authors so particularly appealing to Eriugena—was, in fact, already very much qualified by these authors themselves, and is certainly not coextensive with the Eastern spiritual tradition as a whole.

But even more significant are the very basic Trinitarian and christological options taken in the East, which were known and accepted by the very Eastern authors used by Eriugena, particularly in their view of creation.

A first and most important point is the distinction between *nature* (φύσις) and *will* (θέλημα) in the anti-Arian argument of St Athanasius in favor of the Nicene *homoousios*. By *nature*, God generates the Son and makes the Spirit to proceed; by *will*, he creates the world, and this creative action is conceived as *optional*, precisely because it does not involve God's nature, and excludes ontological continuity between God and creation.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. W. Jaeger, *Two Rediscovered Works of Ancient Christian Literature: Gregory of Nyssa and Macarius* (Leiden, 1954).

This distinction between *nature* and *will* was a major argument in Athanasius against the idea that the Logos was a creature. Creation's *preexistence* in the mind of the Logos did not imply real *existence*, but was seen as a pure potentiality. Therefore, as distinct from the Son, who comes from the essence or nature of the Father, "the nature of creatures which came into being from nothing is fluid, impotent, mortal, and composite."<sup>21</sup> God, therefore, is *what He is*, and is not determined by what *He does*.<sup>22</sup> The familiarity of both Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus with this basic postulate of Athanasian anti-arianism made it quite impossible for them to approach the problem of creation as Eriugena did, and indeed they both are very clear in affirming the creating act as a creation *from nothing and in time*. For God, creation was not a matter of natural necessity, but an act, in a sense arbitrary, of a loving, personal God.

The second and very significant factor which had a decisive significance, if not for Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius, at least for Maximus, is the refinement of christological thought and christological terminology on the basis of the Chalcedonian definition and the controversies which followed it. The union of two natures in one *hypostasis*—the preexisting *hypostasis* of the Logos—implied that Jesus, being God hypostatically and fully divine in His divine nature, possessed also the fullness of a willing and dynamic humanity, without being a human *hypostasis*, or person. This doctrine implied that the *hypostasis* was neither the expression of a nature nor was it part of nature, because if *hypostasis* was a part of nature, Christ could not be fully man. In the case of the humanity of Jesus, the *hypostasis* could not, for example, be identified with his human intellect, because the intellect is part of human created nature. The ultimate "self," the "actor" of His human nature being thus the divine Logos, He nevertheless lived a fully human life, and possessed "energy" and a human "will."

Eriugena seems to have understood the specific importance of the very distinct concept of *hypostasis* in Trinitarian theology, as promoted by the Cappadocians. This he shows in his discussion of the procession of the Spirit, which I mentioned earlier. But his monistic approach to reality

<sup>21</sup> Athanasius, *Contra gentes* 41, PG 25, col. 81 CD.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. on that point G. Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in Saint Athanasius," *Studia patristica* VI, part IV (*Text u. untersuchungen* 81, Berlin, 1962), pp. 36-7; also J. Meyendorff, "Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983), pp. 27-30.

prevents him from giving full credit to the proper dynamism—we can say creativity—of created nature—the “movement” (κίνησις)—in the person of Christ and, by implication, in created nature in general. Since created nature, including the humanity of Jesus, is in fact for Eriugena an expression of the divine being, his christology had necessarily a monophysitic outlook. Created history had no value in itself, except within the framework of the “procession and return” scheme.

It is true, however, that when he discusses the process of *return*, developing his discussion very much in accordance with Gregory of Nyssa and Dionysius, through various steps of purification and illumination, he uses a terminology which is not Augustinian, but assumes the Eastern concept of “synergy” between nature and grace: “Resurrection,” he writes, “is effected by the cooperation of both agents, nature and grace.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, “the human nature possesses naturally the power of resurrection.”<sup>24</sup> But since “created nature” is but the manifestation of divine ideas, the significance of “synergy” in Eriugena may not be the same as in patristic authors, for whom created being is clearly distinct from God, exists only by His will, but possesses also—as Maximus shows so well—its own distinctive “movement” and “energy,” which are called to act in communion with God, but without ever identifying with divine energy.

A third element, certainly implied in the first two, which draws a distinctive line between Eriugena and the Greek fathers whom he admired so much, is their respective attitudes towards what can broadly be called *Origenism*. In fact, it is mostly through Origen that the Cappadocian Fathers appropriated their Christian Neoplatonism. However, they were already aware of the one major issue where Origen’s system could hardly be incorporated in the Christian tradition, especially the Nicene faith defended by Athanasius. This issue, as I said earlier, is the issue of creation. Indeed, for Origen—as also, in fact, for Eriugena—creation is God’s *natural* act, an expression of His eternally-subsisting ideas. Implicitly disavowed on this point by the Cappadocians, Origen was eventually condemned by the Fifth Council (553), and this condemnation, which followed specific controversies in the sixth century, was well-known and

<sup>23</sup> *Periphyseon* V, col. 902 D (tr. p. 574).

<sup>24</sup> *Inest enim naturalite humanae naturae virtus resurrectionis*, *Comm. in John*, III, 1, ed. E. Jeaneau (SC 180) (Paris, 1972), p. 206 (=PL122, col. 315 D).

fully taken into account by Maximus. No one in the East would refer to the “blessed” or “great” Origen, as Eriugena does.<sup>25</sup> Of course, John Scot was not a conscious Origenist. He knew Origen only in the corrected Latin translation of Rufinus. But he liked the echoes of the Origenistic approach, which he could discern in Gregory and Maximus, and he did not take into account the radical modifications of Origenistic views which were introduced by the same authors in *their* version of Christian Neoplatonism. The echoes of “unredeemed” Origenism include the doctrines of “double creation” and *apokatastasis* in Gregory of Nyssa, but both Gregory and Maximus conceive of the relationship between Creator and creatures in a way clearly different from Origen and Eriugena.

For Eriugena, the divine *ideas*—“nature created and creating”—are coeternal with God and also constitute the real *substance* of all that is. Although he recognizes that there exists here an insoluble antinomy, he affirms:

Let us believe and, so far as it is given us, contemplate with the keenness of our mind how all things visible and invisible, eternal and temporal, and the eternal itself and time itself, and places and extension, and all things which are spoken of as substance and accident, and, to speak generally, whatever the totality of the whole creature contains, are at the same time eternal and made in the only begotten Word of God, and that in them neither does their eternity precede their making nor their making precede their eternity.<sup>26</sup>

There is, therefore, nothing really external to God, because God not only *will be* “all in all” at the end of time, but always was and is “all in all,” as foundation and essence of all things.

For the Greek authors, the created world is, indeed, ontologically external to God. It is rooted in His will, which is different from His nature. Therefore they recognize a distinction *within God Himself* between His totally transcendent and unknowable essence and His presence *ad extra*, that is His uncreated energy and will. The personal, Trinitarian, uncreated, divine being is therefore *both* totally transcendent and truly immanent. The preexisting ideas of creation were indeed in God before time, but they did not belong to His essence. The deification of humanity and the ultimate eschatological transfiguration of the entire creation imply that God will be “all in all,” but not *by essence* (κατ’ οὐσίαν), which

<sup>25</sup> *Periphyseon* V, col. 922 C (tr. p. 596); col. 929 A (tr. p. 604).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, III col. 669 A (tr. p. 293).

would imply pantheism, but only through His will and uncreated energy, because ontologically and eternally only the Father, the Son and the Spirit are "God by essence" (κατ' οὐσίαν), whereas deification of creation, while fully real, occurs "by energy" (κατ' ἐνέργειαν), or "by grace" (κατὰ χάριν), although it is a participation in the uncreated being of God.

The paradox and the antinomy are, therefore, located within God Himself, and are not reducible to philosophical notions like the neoplatonic Monad, or "divine simplicity."

This doctrine of "energies" appears in different contexts. In the Cappadocian Fathers, it serves to formulate the Orthodox position against Eunomius: "While we affirm," writes Basil, "that we know our God in His energies, we scarcely promise that He may be approached in His very essence. For although His energies descend to us, His essence remains inaccessible."<sup>27</sup> And Gregory of Nyssa expresses very clearly the same antinomy of the divine being: "Wherefore it is true *both* that the pure heart sees God and that no one has ever seen God. In fact He who is invisible by nature becomes visible by His energies, appearing to us in some surroundings of His nature" (ἐν τισι τοῖς περὶ αὐτὸν καθορωμένοις).<sup>28</sup> In St Maximus, the doctrine of the energies becomes a necessary aspect of christology.<sup>29</sup> Each of Christ's two natures expresses itself in an "energy" and a "will." The two energies and wills remain distinct, although the human will follows the divine, and the energies are "penetrating" each other (περιχώρησις), so that on the mount of Transfiguration, or after the Resurrection, the humanity of Jesus appears "deified," i.e., it is penetrated with divine life, anticipating the eschatological glory of all those who are "in Christ." Both the unity of Christ's being and the distinction of natures and energies are possible because of the *hypostatic* union, i.e., the unity of the person of the incarnate Logos, who acts in both fully divine and fully human ways within the mystery of redemption. Finally, in the fourteenth century, Byzantium became the theater of a fierce debate on the reality of mystical experience, which involved different interpretations of the apophatic theology of Dionysius,

<sup>27</sup> Letter 234 to Amphilochios, PG 32, col. 869.

<sup>28</sup> Hom. VI on the Beatitudes, PG 44, col. 1269.

<sup>29</sup> There is a profusion of studies on St Maximus in the last decades (Balthasar, Völker, Thunberg, Guarrigues, Lethel, and others), which differ in some of their interpretations of Maximian theology, but agree on the centrality of christology in his overcoming Origenistic metaphysics.

and of his use of symbolism. Monastic, or "hesychast," theologians, led by Gregory Palamas, affirmed the possibility of communion with God and deification, because divine transcendence, expressed through apophatic theology, apply to the divine essence (οὐσία) only, whereas the "descending" energies—uncreated and truly divine—make possible real communion with God.<sup>30</sup>

There is no doubt that Eriugena's philosophical and religious vision would tend in the direction of palamism in that he stood for the full reality of deification. But the absence, in his system, of the distinction between essence and energy in God inevitably leads him to neoplatonic monism.



Among the other bridge-builders between the Eastern and the Western Christian traditions, Eriugena occupies quite a unique position. He is different from those predecessors, such as Jerome and Cassian, who had personally been in the East and who transmitted the ascetic traditions of Eastern monks to their Latin compatriots. In the age of Eriugena, times were different and direct communications more difficult. Without apparently any direct contacts with living Easterners, he nevertheless became personally enthusiastic with what he found in the writings of the Greek fathers, but his enthusiasm was only an aspect of his broader philosophical commitment to the neoplatonic worldview.

The question which might tentatively be asked is: what is the major source of his knowledge of Christian Neoplatonism? The standard answer has often been: his acquaintance with the writings of Dionysius, which he translated into Latin. One wonders, however, whether this answer is fully accurate. Eriugena's admiration for Dionysius as "the highest theologian" and "most famous bishop of Athens" (*summus theologus, praeclarissimus Athenarum episcopus*)<sup>31</sup> is, of course, obvious. Constant also in Eriugena is the use of the very specific Dionysian vocabulary and terminology. But the key concepts of Eriugena's system, such as, very particularly, his notion of an eternal creation

<sup>30</sup> For a recent introduction to the issue, see *Gregory Palamas. The Triads*, edited with an Introduction by John Meyendorff. Translated by Nicholas Gendle. Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan (*Classics of Western Spirituality*, Paulist Press, New York, 1983); a more complete discussion and bibliography in J. Meyendorff, "Palamas, Gregoire," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (Paris, 1937), cols. 81-107; cf. also my *Introduction à l'étude de Spiritualité de Gregoire Palamas* (Paris, 1959), Engl. tr. London, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> *Periphyseon* III, col. 644 B (tr. p. 263).

of ideas—with creatures being thus eternal manifestations of the divine being—does not come from Dionysius, but are rather akin to basic Origenism. It is also the more Origenistic aspects of the anthropology and cosmology of Gregory of Nyssa which are picked up by Eriugena, as I have noted earlier. It is difficult to say, however—because references to Origen in Eriugena are rare, though always respectful—whether there is direct inspiration or borrowing, or whether the obvious parallelisms are to be understood in the context of a common neoplatonic inspiration. In using and discussing apophatic theology, Eriugena is, of course, quite dependent upon Dionysian terminology, but in substance the apophatic approach is fully expressed in the Cappadocian Fathers and Maximus as well, so Eriugena did not need Dionysius to learn about apophatic theology. But for the Cappadocian Fathers and for the many later interpreters of Dionysius, starting with Maximus the Confessor, the apophatic, negative expressions in designating God mean to indicate the gap between Him, as Creator or Cause of beings, from the creatures whose very existence is caused by Him. This radical character of apophaticism in Dionysius is what makes his God different from the “One” of Plotinus, and allows us to classify him among those Greek fathers who hold to the idea of God as the true *Creator* from nothing, while using Greek apophatic terminology to express the Hebrew biblical idea of creation from nothing.<sup>32</sup>

Since, on this point, Eriugena holds to an *ontological continuity* between Creator and creatures—following Origen—one wonders whether his apophaticism does not rather tend in the direction which it will acquire in Thomism, as a way of simply expressing the “more sublime” character of the divine names, or qualities, when they are compared with the lower and imperfect manifestations of the same name and qualities among creatures.

An example of an unquestionable and direct borrowing from Dionysius by Eriugena can be found in the doctrine of spiritual hierarchy, but it occupies only a rather peripheral place in the overall system of Eriugena.<sup>33</sup>

Considering the work of that extraordinary man, one can only regret that he was so lonely in his interest and commitment to the Greek

32 Cf. V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, second edition (Crestwood, NY, 1976), pp. 29-43.

33 Eriugena's *Expositiones super Ierarchias sancti Dionysii* were apparently written in 865-870, i.e., after the *Periphyseon* (cf. M. Cappuyns, *Jean Scot Erigène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée* (Paris-Louvain, 1933), p. 220.

Christian tradition. If knowledge of that tradition had been more widespread, Eriugena could more easily have given a more “catholic,” or more “orthodox,” shape to his system, without abandoning that which is so precious in it—his “theocentric anthropology” and his understanding of spiritual life as a free ascent to *theosis*. He is obviously sincere when he writes,

It is most clear that our sole quest should be joy in the Truth, which is Christ; and our sole dread the deprivation of it, for that is the one and only cause of all eternal suffering. Take Christ from me, and no good is left for me, nor is there any torment left to terrify me. For I hold that the deprivation of Christ and His absence are the sole torment for every rational creature and that there is no other.<sup>34</sup>

To quote Etienne Gilson,

one can imagine the astonishment of contemporaries on the face of this immense metaphysical epos..., supported, at each step, by Dionysius, Maximus, the two Gregories, Origen, Augustine, or some other among the twenty authorities which our author could invoke with his astonishing erudition. Things happen as if Eriugena had fulfilled a pledge to affirm all the propositions, put forward by Doctors of the Church when they were not speaking as Doctors of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, in Eriugena's time, his system did not succeed in bridging the intellectual and spiritual gap between the two worlds, which continued to move in their separate ways. But today, as we know more about the problems which separated them, Eriugena deserves to be rediscovered, as a lonely, but prophetic and powerful voice, searching for the right solutions, but hardly succeeding in a task much too vast to be handled by his lonely, isolated genius.

34 *Periphyseon* V, col. 989 A (tr. p. 674).

35 *La philosophie au Moyen-Age* (Paris, 1952), p. 222.

## Theology in the Thirteenth Century: Methodological Contrasts<sup>1</sup>

The sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 and the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe in 1237-1240 were catastrophic events which challenged the very existence of Eastern Christendom as a social and cultural entity. It survived, nevertheless, with a remarkable commitment to theological continuity. The same thirteenth century saw the emergence, in the Latin West, of a new and dynamic framework for intellectual creativity in the universities and the religious orders, which radically changed the way in which Christian theology was "made."

In the context of the period, the term "theology" itself demands a definition. In Byzantine society—as well as in the Western, early medieval world—theological concepts, convictions and beliefs were present in practically all aspects of social or individual life. They were not only used at episcopal synods, or in polemical debates between representatives of divided churches, or enshrined in treatises, sermons, anthologies and patristic collections. They were heard or sung, on a daily basis, even by the illiterate, in the hymnology of the Church. They were unavoidable in political matters, based on a religious view of kingship. To limit ourselves to the thirteenth century, it is sufficient to recall the debate on the use of Holy Chrism (μύρον) in the anointment of emperors, and, therefore, on the nature and significance of the chrism itself, as discussed by Demetrios Chomatianos in connection with the coronation of Theodore Lascaris in Nicaea (1208).<sup>2</sup> Theological presuppositions were also involved in economic and social realities, as shown, for example, in the Church's attitude

1 First published by A. D. Caratzas in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers* (New Rochelle, NY, 1986). Reprinted by permission of Aristides D. Caratzas, Publisher.

2 Cf. on this issue, A. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epirus (1217-1233)* (Thessaloniki, 1973); and my discussion of the events and the Byzantine Congress in Athens in 1976 ("Ideological Crises in Byzantium 1071 to 1261," repr. in *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* [Crestwood, NY, 1982], pp. 67-85).



towards usury, or in requirements connected with marriage, or the religious basis of regulating church property, or the theological rationale which determined forms of art and iconography.

It is therefore very difficult to give a really strict and clearly limited definition of "theology" in a Byzantine or early medieval Western context. However, precisely in the thirteenth century, an institutional, social and conceptual bifurcation establishes itself between the Latin West and the new Greek (and Slavic) East. The first part of my paper will point to that new contrast. The following two parts will briefly discuss the theological confrontation between East and West in the thirteenth century, and the new emergence of a "monastic" theology in the Byzantine world.

### *The West: Universities and Religious Orders*

A brief of Pope Innocent III, published around 1211, gave a new legal and canonical status to the *Studium parisiense*, a corporation of teachers and students who were dispersing and receiving learning under the auspices of either the cathedral or the monastery of Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. The brief stipulated that a "proctor" of the new University would represent it at the papal court. In 1215, a papal legate, Robert de Courson, sanctioned the University's statutes. Although King Philip-Augustus also recognized the new institution, it is the papal decree which gave it a universal significance. However, the "universality" of the Latin world of the thirteenth century was a relative concept. In any case, its world-view was defined without any reference to the tradition of the East. It was dominated by the concern of the Latin Church for the integrity of its tradition, which was challenged not by Greeks, but by a flow of truly revolutionary ideas resulting from the translation of Aristotle from Arabic into Latin, and the infusion—together with that translation—of Arab philosophy, which was itself rooted in Neoplatonism. To use a phrase of Etienne Gilson: "The *Studium parisiense* was established as a spiritual and moral force, whose deepest significance is neither Parisian, nor French, but Christian and ecclesiastical. It became an element of the Universal Church, in exactly the same way as the priesthood and the empire."<sup>3</sup>

The tremendous expansion of knowledge and methodology contained

<sup>3</sup> *La philosophie au moyen-âge, des origines patristiques à la fin du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1952), p. 395.

in the newly available texts and ideas was not confronted, in Latin Christendom, with old patterns and forms inherited from Late Antiquity, but through the creation of new tools and new institutions, generating new forms of thought and intellectual creativity, which were, however, to be directed and controlled by the *magisterium* of the Church. This new and creative initiative, which was to have such a fundamental importance for the development of modern Europe, placed the *Studium* on the same level with the *Sacerdotium* and the *Imperium*. According to the Franciscan chronicler Jordan of Giano, the three institutions were like the foundation, the walls and the roof of a single building—the Catholic Church—which without their cooperation could not achieve proper structure and growth.<sup>4</sup>

Although the two English universities created a few decades later at Oxford and Cambridge were less tightly attached to the Roman *magisterium*, they reflected the same basic trend towards structure and professionalism. The consequences for the very nature of *theology* were radical: it became a science—the highest of all, of course—to which the other disciplines, including philosophy and the natural sciences, were to be subservient. It was taught by licensed professionals at a special faculty, the faculty of theology, whose teaching was supervised on a regular basis by the *magisterium* of the Church. This supervision was direct and concrete. In 1215, the papal legate, Robert de Courson, forbade the teaching of physics and metaphysics in Paris. In 1228, Pope Gregory IX reminded the faculty that theology should direct other sciences, as the spirit directs the flesh, and, in 1231, he called the masters of theology "not to try to appear as philosophers."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, even if these papal reminders made plain the requirement for the *Studium* to act in accordance with the *Sacerdotium*, the main results of the work of the universities was a new creative synthesis, known as Scholasticism—best exemplified in the work of St Thomas Aquinas—a synthesis between Christian revelation and Greek philosophy, clearly distinct from both the platonic legacy of St Augustine, or the Greek legacy of Origen and the Cappadocian Fathers of the fourth century, which were accepted as major criteria of orthodoxy in the East.

Another decisive factor which enhanced professionalism in theology was the rise of religious orders—an institution also unknown in the

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Gilson, *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Cf. texts quoted in Gilson, *ibid.*, p. 396.

East—and whose role in education and the development of theological schools would be extraordinary. In 1216, Pope Honorius III formally sanctioned the existence of the Order of the Preachers, or “Dominicans,” which made the study of theology so much of an obligation for its members that seven of them went to Paris that same year. Half a century later, the theology of one great Dominican, Thomas, would dominate the Latin world. The order of St Francis also became, under its “second founder” St Bonaventure (1257-74), a major promoter of theological study. Even the Cistercians followed the general mood, establishing houses of study in Paris and Oxford, where both Dominican and Franciscan priories had obtained almost a monopoly in teaching theology.

Such scholastic professionalism—a clerical monopoly of Latin learning—was quite foreign to the Byzantines. In the East, not only clerics and monks, but also laymen—including emperors and civil officials—could be involved in theology and publish treatises. There were no organized theological schools. Theology was seen as the highest form of knowledge, but not as a “science” among others to be learned at school. The patriarchal school of Constantinople never developed into a hotbed of new theological ideas. It trained primarily ecclesiastical administrators and canonists.<sup>6</sup> In the twelfth century, very sophisticated debates had taken place in the Byzantine capital, involving Eustratius of Nicaea (1117), Soterichus Panteugenos (1155-6), Constantine of Corfu and John Eirenikos (1167-70), but these were aftermaths of old christological controversies, involving dialogues with Armenians<sup>7</sup>—nothing really related to the problems of the day. The gigantic intellectual developments occurring in the West were apparently passing Byzantium by. As late as 1347, after all the events of the thirteenth century, the Byzantine aristocrat Demetrius Kydones is surprised when he discovers that Latins “show great thirst for walking in those labyrinths of Aristotle and Plato, for which our people never showed interest.”<sup>8</sup>

6 Cf. R. Browning, “The Patriarchal School at Constantinople in the Twelfth Century,” *Byzantion*, 32 (1962), pp. 167-202; 33 (1963), pp. 11-40.

7 The best recent review of these debates, whose results were enshrined in the *Synodikon of Orthodoxy*, is by J. Gouillard, “Le Synodikon de l’orthodoxie. Edition et commentaire,” *TM*, 2 (1967), pp. 1-316.

8 *Apology I*, in G. Mercati, *Notizie di Procoro e Demetrio Cidone (Studi e testi 56, Città del Vaticano, 1931)*, p. 366; also F. Kianka, “The Apology of Demetrius Cydones,” *Byzantine Studies*, 8 (1980), pp. 57-71.

If one considers the autobiographies of two prominent Greek theologians of the thirteenth century, Nicephorus Blemmydes and Gregory of Cyprus, who were directly involved in contacts with the Latins, one discovers that neither of them received a structured, theological training, comparable to what the rise of Scholasticism was making available to their Latin counterparts. Both were quite learned men, but their education was acquired by methods identical to those used since Late Antiquity, in various places and under individual masters. Theology as a formal discipline is not even mentioned in the curriculum covered by Blemmydes under a certain Monasteriotes in Brusa, under several unnamed teachers in Nicaea, under Demetrius Karykes (who was invested with the formerly prestigious title ὑπάτος τῶν ἱεροσολων in Smyrna, under his own father (with whom he studied medicine), and under a certain Prodrimos in a small city on the river Skamandron. He was tested in rhetorical skills at the court of Emperor John Vatatzes in Nymphaeum, before entering a monastery, where finally, on his own, he consecrated himself to the study of Scripture and patristic writings.<sup>9</sup> Gregory of Cyprus, eventually a patriarch of Constantinople, does not mention theological training at all in his *Autobiography*,<sup>10</sup> but point to some elementary education at a Latin school under the Latin archbishop of Nicosia, followed by wanderings in search of knowledge, which he finally acquired primarily under the humanist George Acropolites in Constantinople (1267-74).

The best of the Byzantine theologians of the period did not lack sophistication and basic information about Greek philosophy and patristic theological tradition. However, in meeting their Latin counterparts, who were graduates of Western universities, they encountered not only professionalism and argumentative skills unprecedented in Christendom,

9 Cf. Nicephorus Blemmydes, *Curriculum vitae et carmina*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 2-18; new ed. by J. A. Munitiz, *Autobiographia sive curriculum vitae (CCGS, 13, Turnhout and Louvain, 1984)*, pp. 4-15; English translation with full commentary by J. A. Munitiz, *Nikephoros Blemmydes. A partial Account* (Louvain, 1988) (= *Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense* 48), pp. 43-57. On secular studies in the Nicaean empire, see particularly M. A. Andeeva, *Očerki no kul'ture vizantiiskago dvora v XIII veke* (Travaux de la société royale des sciences de Bohême. Classe des lettres. Nouvelle série, VIII, 3) (Prague, 1927), pp. 128-160; also M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 174-81.

10 Ed. W. Lameere, with French tr. (*La tradition manuscrite de la correspondance la Grégoire de Chypre* [Brussels-Paris, 1937], pp. 176-91); Russian tr. by I. E. Troitsky in *Kristianskoe Chtenie* (St Petersburg, 1870), I, pp. 164-77.

but also a sense of academic and cultural self-sufficiency, which often bewildered them, making them even more defensive in their attitude towards Latin Christendom.

No real attempt was made until the second half of the fourteenth century by any Greek theologian to become acquainted with the real substance of Latin theology and Latin intellectual methods. The Greek translations of Augustine's *De Trinitate* by Maximus Planudes (d. 1310) remained the work of an isolated humanist, whose work was hardly ever used by Byzantine theologians.<sup>11</sup>

### Theological Encounters

The establishment in 1204 of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, and of the various Latin principalities in the Orient, as well as the expansion of the mercantile empire of the Italian city-republics, were hardly conducive to fraternal intellectual dialogues between Greeks and Latins.<sup>12</sup> The Greek intellectuals who possessed theological skills left for either Nicaea, or Epirus. The clergy remaining under Latin occupation struggled for the preservation of its Orthodox identity. Forced to engage in various forms of institutional and canonical compromises,<sup>13</sup> it was not prepared for dialogue or academic competition. The unprecedented installation, formally confirmed by Innocent III, of a Latin patriarch, the Venetian Thomas Morosini, at St Sophia provoked a renewed and more articulate Greek polemic against the Latin interpretation of "Petrine" primacy;<sup>14</sup>

11 It has been suggested that the Augustinian "psychological images" of the Trinity, learned from the translations of Planudes, had inspired one passage of the *Capita* of Gregory Palamas. But the parallelism is in fact quite superficial (cf. M. E. Hussey, "The Palamite Trinitarian Models," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 16 (1972), pp. 83-9).

12 On the period, see K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, I (Philadelphia, 1976).

13 Cf. for instance the disputations of Nicholas Masarites in Constantinople in 1206 (Ed. A. Heisenberg, "Aus der Geschichte und Literatur der Palaiologenzeit," in *Sitzungsberichte der bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos. Philog. und hist. Klasse*, 1922, 5; repr. Variorum, London, 1973); and a curious letter by the Greek clergy of Constantinople to Innocent III, accepting to commemorate the pope, as a secular ruler, but not as an ecclesiastical authority (PG 140, col. 297C; cf. P. L'Huillier, "La nature des relations ecclésiastiques gréco-latines après la prise de Constantinople par les Croisés," *Akten des XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, 1958 [Munich, 1960], pp. 317-8).

14 Cf. my old article "St Peter in Byzantine Theology," in *The Primacy of Peter in the Orthodox Church*, ed. J. Meyendorff (London, 1963), pp. 7-29.

but the Trinitarian problem connected with the Latin addition of the *filioque* to the Nicaean-Constantinopolitan Creed still remained as in the past the focus of all theological debates, which would continue to take place within and beyond the borders of the Latin empire.

It is obviously impossible to review here all such encounters and episodes.<sup>15</sup> The three most important are: 1) The meetings at Nicaea and Nymphaeum in 1234, which witnessed an initial encounter between the Greeks and the new breed of Latin "scholastic" theologians; 2) The encounter in Nicaea between a legate of Innocent IV, the Franciscan, John of Parma, and Nicephorus Blemmydes; and 3) The events connected with the Council of Lyons (1274). At that council itself, no theological debate took place, but the formal decree of union was followed by a prolonged crisis within the Byzantine Church, resulting in a conciliar decision defining the position of the Byzantine Church on the *filioque* issue.

The debates of 1234 resulted from a correspondence between Pope Gregory IX and Patriarch Germanus II. The pope appointed two Dominicans and two Franciscans as spokesmen for the Latin Church, whereas the Greek side was represented by the patriarch himself. The actual speakers for the Greek point of view were two laymen, Demetrios Karykes (the "consul of philosophers") and the young Nicephorus Blemmydes. The Emperor John Vatatzes presided.

Lasting over four months,<sup>16</sup> the debates were concerned with the *filioque* issue and, at the insistence of the Greeks, with the use of the unleavened bread in the Eucharist by the Latins. In oral argument with the friars, the first Greek spokesman Karykes was totally confused, but a written document submitted by Blemmydes showed the two respective positions to be irreconcilable.

15 For basic bibliography, see V. I. Barvinok, *Nikofor vlemmid i ego sochineniia* (Kiev, 1911)—a very careful study deserving a reprint; I. E. Troitsky, "K istorii spora ob iskhozhdenii Sv. Dukha," *Khristianskoe Chtenie*, 1889, I, pp. 338-77; 581-605; II, pp. 280-352, 520-70; D. J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West: A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations* (Cambridge, 1959); J. Gill, *Byzantium and the Papacy, 1198-1400* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1979); A. Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium. The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283-1289)* (New York, 1983); D. M. Nichol, several articles reprinted in *Byzantium: Its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World* (London: Variorum, 1986), pp. 211-9.

16 The report of the friars to the pope has been published by G. Golubovich in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 12 (1919), 428-65; cf. an older edition in Mansi, *Collectio Conciliorum* XXIII, cols. 279-320D.

The debates in Nicaea between John of Parma and the Greeks (1250), as reported by the main Greek participant, the same Nicephorus Blemmydes—now a monk and a priest—also brought no agreement, but it focused the argument on Greek patristic texts, which describe the Holy Spirit as “acting *through the Son*” (δι’ υἱοῦ). The Latins used such texts to prove their point: acting “through the Son,” they said, is the same as proceeding “through the Son,” because “through,” in this context, means the same as “from.”

In his public replies to the Latin theologians, Blemmydes tried to show that the problem is not in finding accommodating synonyms, but in preserving the *hypostatic*, or personal characteristics of each Divine Person. Indeed, as most scholars today would agree,<sup>17</sup> the real difference between the Latin—Augustinian—view of the Trinity as a single Essence, with personal characters understood as relations, and the Greek scheme inherited from the Cappadocian Fathers, which considered the single divine Essence as totally transcendent, and the Persons, or *hypostaseis*—each with unique and unchangeable characteristics—as revealing in themselves the Tripersonal divine life, was the real issue behind the debates on the *filioque*. The Greeks would not understand the Latin argument, which affirmed: the Father and the Son are One Essence; therefore they are the One source of the Spirit, proceeding “from both” (*a Patre Filioque*).

Blemmydes did remain faithful to the Greek scheme of the Trinity. But, after his talks with the Latins in 1234 and 1250, he personally became strongly committed to the cause of church unity and defended the idea that the image of the Spirit’s procession “through the Son” can serve as a bridge between the two theologies. In two short treatises addressed respectively to a friend, Jacob, archbishop of Ohrid, and to Emperor Theodore II Lascaris (whom he had tutored and for whom he also wrote a book called Βασιλικὸς Ἀνδρίας—“the Model of an Emperor”), Blemmydes collected patristic texts using the formula “through the Son” and attacked those Greeks who out of anti-Latin zeal were

17 “Latin philosophy considers the nature in itself and proceeds to the agent; Greek philosophy considers the agent first and passes through it to find the nature. The Latins think of personality as a mode of nature; the Greeks think of nature as the content of the person.” Th. de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Saint Trinité* (Paris, 1892), p. 433; cf. also Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York, second edition, 1983), pp. 180-189.

refusing to give it enough importance.<sup>18</sup> In general, and already since Photius, the Greek position consisted in distinguishing the *eternal* procession of the Son from the Father, and the *sending* of the Spirit *in time* through the Son and by the Son. This distinction between the eternal procession and temporal manifestations was among the Byzantines the standard explanation for the numerous New Testament passages where Christ is described as “giving” and “sending” the Spirit, and where the Spirit is spoken of as the “Spirit of the Son.” In his letters to Archbishop Jacob and Emperor Theodore Lascaris, however, Blemmydes specifically avoided the distinction between eternity and time: the patristic formula “through the Son” reflected both the eternal relationships of the divine Persons and the level of “economy” in time.

Blemmydes hoped to satisfy both sides by his approach: “Our times call us to draw many people to concord in Christ,” he wrote.<sup>19</sup> He was challenging the stubborn defensiveness of Byzantine polemicists, who were calling into question the opposition between the “eternal” and the “temporal” in Trinitarian relations. Was not the coming of the Spirit through Christ a manifestation of the eternal life of God, and, therefore, manifested the eternal relationships of the divine Persons? But, then—some of his readers would ask—were not the Latins right in speaking of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son?

Blemmydes himself always remained faithful to the Greek patristic vision of the personal relationships in the Trinity.<sup>20</sup> But his was a searching mind, he liked to take some risks. However, he had neither the time, nor

18 *Treatise to Jacob*, PG 142, cols. 553-65; *To Theodore Lascaris*, *ibid.*, cols. 565-84. The treatises were private reports, not designed for wide circulation. According to Nicephorus Gregoras, he wrote them “secretly” (ἀόφρα, *Byz. Hist.*, V, 6, PG 148, col. 269A). The life and thought of Blemmydes have been controversial in his lifetime, in the following generation (Pachymeres, Gregoras) and among later historians. L. Allatius considered him a crypto-Latin (cf. *Ecclesiae Occidentalis abque Orientali perpetua consensione* [Cologne, 1648], p. 712ff). For E. Voulgaris (‘Ανάκρισις περὶ Νικηφόρου τοῦ Βλεμμίδου in Ἰωσήφ Βρυεννίου τὰ Παραλειπόμενα, III [Leipzig, 1784], pp. 307-400, and A. Dimitrakopoulos (Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη I [Leipzig, 1866], pp. 25-34) see him as a staunch Orthodox. For modern judgments on his treatises to Jacob and the Emperor Theodore, see Barvinok, *Nikofor Vlemmid*, pp. 109-145 and Gill, *Byzantium*, pp. 152-7.

19 *To Jacob*, PG 142, col. 560B.

20 He expressed it forcefully in his treatise *On the Faith* (Περὶ πίστεως), which was a sort of testament left to his monastic community before his death (PG 142, cols. 585-605). It seems quite unnecessary to suppose that he “modified his views certainly once, possibly twice” (Gill, *Byzantium*, p. 152).

the opportunity to draw all the conclusions of his search. Others will draw such conclusions, but in different directions.

In 1274, Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus signed a confession of faith drafted, in full conformity with Latin theology, by four Dominican friars sent specially to Constantinople by Pope Gregory X. The signature, given in advance, made the emperor eligible to participate through delegates in the ecumenical council of Lyons, where a union of the churches was proclaimed without further discussion. It is unfortunate that the confession, under the obvious influence of the new systematic approach to theology in Western Scholasticism, also included a new element, which had never before been debated formally between East and West: the Latin doctrine of purgatory.<sup>21</sup> The issue remained on the agenda until the council of Florence.

It is obviously impossible to discuss here all the participants and the episodes of the debates spurred in Byzantium by the Union of Lyons. There is an abundant secondary literature on the subject.<sup>22</sup> I would like simply to point at one fact: the decisive bifurcation between two main Greek protagonists—John Beccos and Gregory of Cyprus—was based on the views expressed by Nicephorus Blemmydes, from which they drew different conclusions. John Beccos became convinced, after reading Blemmydes,<sup>23</sup> that the formula “through the Son,” since it designates the *eternal* procession of the Spirit, fully justifies the Latin *filioque*. He was promoted to the patriarchate by Michael VIII and became the great defender of the Decree of Lyons. Gregory of Cyprus, the Orthodox successor of Beccos, a former partisan of the Union and, undoubtedly, also a reader of Blemmydes, accepted the latter’s idea that the formula “through the Son” reflects eternal divine life. However, he refused to follow Beccos into the Latin camp: his resistance to the Latin conception of the Trinity was based on the distinction between the nature of God,

21 Text of the confession in H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, ed. K. Rahner (Freiburg, 1952), pp. 214-5. It seems that the first mention of Purgatory as a problem between the churches occurred in 1235-6, when a Franciscan, Fra. Bartholomew, began to interrogate a Greek ambassador, the metropolitan of Corfu, George Bardanes, on this subject at Orvieto (cf. M. Roncaglia, *George Bardanes et Barthélemy* (Rome, 1953) (= *Studi e Testi Francescani* 4); cf. also J. M. Hoeck and R. J. Loenertz, *Nicolaos-Nectarios von Otranto* (Ettal, 1965), p. 155.

22 The last very well-documented study is by A. Papadakis, *Crisis*, where previous publications are studied in detail.

23 Pachymeres, *De Michaelis et Andronico Palaeologis*, ed. Bekker (Bonn, 1835), I, p. 381.

and His *charismata*, or “eternal manifestation” (ἐκφανσις αἰδίου): the eternal, divine *charismata* of the Spirit, he proclaimed, are indeed manifested “through the Son,” but the personal “hypostatic” *existence* of the Spirit is from the Father, who is the unique personal source and origin of the Son and the Spirit, as persons.<sup>24</sup> This theology of Gregory of Cyprus provoked quite some discussion in Constantinople, anticipating the debates between Palamas and his adversaries in the following century,<sup>25</sup> but it was endorsed by the Council of Blachernae of 1285.<sup>26</sup>

### Monastic Theology

The adjective “monastic” is used here for lack of a better term. It is true that Byzantine theology of the period is often associated with “hesychasm”—a movement traced back to the writings of Nicephorus the Hesychast, and other spiritual authors of the late thirteenth century, who promoted a psychosomatic method of using the “Jesus Prayer.” However, the *theological* trend, represented in the fourteenth century by Palamism, was not coextensive, or identical with the individual ascetic mysticism evoked by the term “hesychasm.”<sup>27</sup> Palamas himself, when he refers to recent “authorities” for his own theological formulations, mentions particularly Theoleptus of Philadelphia and Patriarch Athanasius I,<sup>28</sup> whereas his main disciple, Philotheos Kokkinos, refers to Gregory of Cyprus.<sup>29</sup> The antecedents of the theological revival of the fourteenth century are therefore not exclusively “monastic.” Nevertheless, in the Palaeologan period the Byzantine Church gradually came to be dominated by monastic clergy. This domination was really completed in 1347 with

24 Blemmydes did not establish any distinction between the Spirit as person, and the *charismata*.

Neither did Beccos (cf. Papadakis, *Crisis*, p. 98, note 33). The distinction is the principal contribution of Gregory of Cyprus.

25 Many texts are gathered in V. Laurent and J. Darrouzès, eds., *Dossier Grec de l'Union de Lyon, 1273-1277* (Paris, 1976).

26 The text of the *Tomos* is in PG 142, cols. 233-46; English tr. in Papadakis, *Crisis*, appendix I, pp. 155-65.

27 Cf. my article “Is Hesychasm the Right Word?” in *Okeanos. Essays presented to Ihor Sevcenko*, 1983) (= *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* VII), pp. 447-57.

28 Tr. I, 2, 12; 2, 3, in J. Meyendorff, ed., Palamas, *Défense des saints hesychastes* (Louvain, 1973, second edition) (= *Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense*, 30-31), pp. 99, 323-24.

29 *Contra Gregoriam Antirrh.*, VI, PG 151, col. 915CD; cf. another palamite theologian, Joseph Calothetos, *Life of Athanasius*, ed. D. Tsames, *ἡ ὡση Καλοθετου συγγραμματα* (Thessaloniki, 1980), p. 482. The antipalamite Akindynos is understandably a critic of Gregory of Cyprus (cf. J. Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas* [Paris, 1959], English tr., 2nd ed., Crestwood, NY, 1974, p. 24).



the victory in the civil war by John Cantacuzenos, but the process had begun already with the patriarchate of Athanasius I (1289-1293, 1303-1310). This "monastic" trend was contemporary with a theological revival which was not directly connected with union negotiations or anti-Latin polemics, but emerged within the Byzantine church itself, reflecting its intellectual and spiritual concerns, and the social issues of the day. Its orientation consisted in placing strong emphasis on spirituality and sacramentalism, as evidenced in works—largely unpublished still—of the metropolitan of Philadelphia, Theoleptus (ca. 1250-ca. 1324),<sup>30</sup> or the dynamic, and sometimes fanatical social activism of Patriarch Athanasius.<sup>31</sup> In the late thirteenth century however, the major theological issue which confronted everyone of these authors was connected with church order and ecclesiology: the lingering "Arsenite schism," whose leadership was also predominantly monastic, often invoked the "spiritual" authority of "holy" individuals to the sacramental and canonical responsibility of bishops. Men like Theoleptus and Athanasius, who did not always agree with each other on methods and persons, were nevertheless concerned with reforming the episcopate and the monasteries simultaneously, and both saw many bishops and many monks as unworthy of their calling, or misunderstanding their roles and responsibilities within the Church. It is interesting to note that most of the Byzantine writing of the period is connected with "ecclesiology," but it is not so much preoccupied with the issue of papal primacy, as with the internal issues of the Eastern Church itself.<sup>32</sup> This spiritual, but at the same time social and reformist orientation of the theologians, whom I call "monastic," stands in some contrast with the writers of intellectuals like Nicephorus Blemmydes. This contrast anticipates the confrontation, which will begin more distinctly in the

30 The interesting personality of Theoleptus deserves further study, as can be seen from preliminary investigation, such as those of S. Salaville (cf. particularly two articles in the *REB*, 5 [1947], pp. 101-15, 116-36; also "Un directeur spirituel à Byzance au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle: Théolepte de Philadelphie," *Mélanges J. de Ghellinck*, II Gembloux, 1951, pp. 877-87), V. Laurent, ("Les crises religieuses à Byzance: Le schisme anti-arsénite du métropolite Théolepte de Philadelphie," *REB*, 18 [1960], pp. 45-54), and D. Constantelos ("Mysticism and social involvement in the later Byzantine Church. Theoleptus of Philadelphia: a Case Study," *Byzantine Studies*, 6 [1979], pp. 49-60).

31 The personality of Athanasius became much better known after the partial publication of his writings by A. M. Talbot, *The Correspondence of Athanasius I, Patriarch of Constantinople* (trans., text and commentary, Washington, DC, 1975 = *CFHB*, VII). Cf. also J. L. Boojamra, *Church Reform in the Late Byzantine Empire* (Thessaloniki, 1982).

32 Cf. J. Darrouzès, *Documents inédits d'ecclésiologie Byzantine* (Paris, 1966), pp. 86-106, 340-413.

fourteenth century, between lovers of secular "Hellenic" learning and the Palamites.

In spite of the vast difference in intellectual makeup and methodological approaches to theology between the professional "scholastics" of the West and the old-fashioned sophisticated scholars of Byzantium, the massive Latin ecclesiastical presence in the East, from Palestine to Greece and to the Italian commercial centers on the Northern shores of the Black Sea, made the thirteenth century a time for inevitable encounters. In Latin-occupied areas, the animosity between the two communities did not prevent friendlier meetings of the level of popular piety: the local population could use a Greek translation of the Roman mass,<sup>33</sup> whereas some Latins liked Byzantine icons and even commissioned some.<sup>34</sup> One can be sure that if, instead of formal, officially-sponsored debates of theologians on the *filioque* issue, more spontaneous and direct encounters were possible between early Franciscans and Byzantine hesychasts, the dialogue would have followed somewhat different directions. But we do not know anything about such encounters, and the historical and cultural conditions of the day did not favor them. The professional Latin theologians were commandeered to refute the Greek positions on the basis of the achievements of the new Scholastic synthesis: St Thomas Aquinas himself was asked to prepare an anti-Greek *dossier* for the council of Lyons.<sup>35</sup> All three major religious orders—Dominicans, Franciscans and Cistercians—established centers in conquered Romania.<sup>36</sup> The Dominican house in Pera, established under the Latin Empire across the Golden Horn from Constantinople, remained active even after 1261 and served as a major point of contact between Byzantine intellectuals and the Latin Church.

Were there concrete results? Yes, in terms of the wholesale adoption by some Greeks of the Latin Thomistic world view. There was no real "move"

33 Cf. Heisenberg, "Aus der Geschichte," pp. 46-52.

34 K. Weitzmann, "Icon painting in the Crusader Kingdom," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 22 (1966), pp. 81-3.

35 Cf. A. Dondaine, "Contra Graecos. Premiers écrits polémiques des Dominicains d'Orient," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 21 (1951), pp. 320-446; "Nicholas de Cotrone et les sources du 'Contra errores Graecorum' de Saint Thomas," *Divus Thomas* 28 (1950), pp. 313-40.

36 Cf. R. J. Loenertz, *Byzantia et Franco-Graeca* (Storia e Letteratura: Raccolta di Studi e Testi, Rome, 1970) (articles on the Dominicans, published between 1935 and 1966); D. J. Geanakoplos, "Bonaventura, the two mendicant orders, and the Greeks at the Council of Lyons (1274)," in D. Baker, ed., *Studies in Church History* 13 (Oxford, 1976), pp. 183-211; B. M. Bolton, "A Mission to the Orthodox? The Cistercians in Romania," *ibid.*, pp. 169-181.

on the Latin side towards discovering that Christian unity might consist in anything else than the simple "conversion" of the Greeks (*reductio Graecorum*). The Orthodox side, however—from Blemmydes to Gregory of Cyprus and to Palamas—was gradually transcending a purely defensive stand by discovering that the real problem of the *filioque* lies not in the formula itself, but in the definition of God as *actus purus* as finalized in the *De ente et essentia* of Thomas Aquinas, vis-à-vis the more personalistic Trinitarian vision inherited by the Byzantines from the Cappadocian Fathers.<sup>37</sup>

37 Cf. J. M. Hussey's observations, leading to similar conclusions in her brilliant book, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 248-9.

## 6

## Was There An Encounter Between East and West at Florence?<sup>1</sup>

The contemporary dialogue between Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy is inevitably based upon a historical vision of Christendom—the vision of communion between what we call East and West during the first millennium of Christian history, and a state of gradual estrangement and schism since the eleventh century. Those of us who are really concerned with Christian unity try to recover the theological and ecclesiological guidelines which allowed sacramental communion and a common witness to the world during the first half of Christian history, the period when—as John Paul II once said—the Church “breathed with its two lungs.” Of course, today—especially in our twentieth century—the categories of East and West are historically and culturally obliterated: the position occupied by the two American continents, Africa and Asia; the disappearance, long ago, of the Byzantine empire and the *de facto* universal adoption of intellectual methodologies established in Western Europe in the nineteenth century, make a clear distinction between Christian “East” and “West” somewhat artificial. This new situation gives us the necessary tools to understand better our common history of the first millennium, and also the nature of the tragic estrangement that followed.

Doubtlessly, the Council of Ferrara-Florence was the most significant attempt, made in the late Middle Ages, to reverse the course of history and to restore a unity of faith and communion between what was then still, rather clearly, an “East” and a “West.” The procedures and the protocol followed at the assembly projected the image of a re-union between the two halves of Christendom. Our knowledge of the assembly today is much more complete than at the time of the interminable polemics between its supporters and its critics, which continued for centuries in the

<sup>1</sup> First published in G. Alberigo, *Christian Unity. The Council of Ferrara-Florence, 1438/9-1989* (University Press, Louvain, 1991), pp. 153-175.

past. Today, we not only have the texts of all the relevant documents in the remarkably complete Vatican editions, but also the beginnings of a more global approach to the history of the Council. One of the principal merits of Joseph Gill, in particular, is to have situated Florence within its *Western* background, as a conclusion of the papacy's struggle against the conciliarists, and the victory of what Gill calls "the traditional order of the Church."<sup>2</sup>

This broader vision, presented by Joseph Gill from a Western perspective, is an excellent—actually necessary—basis for a further "globalization" of the Council's history, and for a more inclusive vision of the realities of the Orthodox world at the time. The aim of my paper is to make some preliminary remarks pointing at the understanding of conciliarity in the East and at what *could* or *should* have happened at a genuine council of union.

### *Florence: Byzantine Hopes Fulfilled*

As used by the Byzantines, the word "ecumenical" implied a peculiar Byzantine view of Christian society. The political "imperial" connotation of the term has been often stressed by historians. And, indeed, if one were to quote a text illustrating the point, one might as well quote the eleventh-century historian Kedrenos: "Councils," he writes "were named ecumenical because bishops of the whole Roman Empire were invited by imperial orders, and at each of them... there was discussion of the faith and a vote, i.e., dogmatic formulae were promulgated."<sup>3</sup> The implication is that local churches, headed by bishops, are held together by a common faith expressed by the councils, but also that this *consensus* is achieved within the framework of the *oikoumene*—a "world," which since Constantine had become officially Christian and within which the emperor was the symbol

<sup>2</sup> "The great achievement of the Council for the West was that it secured the victory of the popes in the struggle of papacy versus council, and the survival of the traditional order of the Church," Joseph Gill, S.J., *The Council of Florence* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 411. The point is also clearly made in Gill's volume on *Constance et Bâle-Florence* in G. Dumeige, S.J., ed., *Histoire des Conciles oecuméniques*, 9 (Paris, Editions de l'Orante, 1965), as well as in other publications by Gill, related to the "event" of Florence.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. I*, 3 (ed. Bonn, 1838), p. 39; cf. on this point an excellent study by J. Anastasiou "What is the Meaning of the Word 'Ecumenical' in Relation to the Councils?" in *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement* (WCC Studies 5, Geneva, 1968), pp. 27-31; also J. Meyendorff, *Living Tradition* (SVS Press, Crestwood NY, 1978), pp. 45-62.

and incarnation of social and religious unity. As we all know, the system has often been described (and condemned) as "caesaropapism"; however, it hardly deserves to be so called. The memory of Byzantine Christendom certainly included images of emperors who misused their function (and were thus called "usurpers," τύραννοι) —Constantius I, Valens, Constantius II, Constantine V Copronymos, and others—and of councils called by them, which were actually pseudo-councils. Thus, neither the emperor nor the councils *per se* could possibly be automatically trusted.

Another essential element of the Byzantine world-view was an immovable vision of the empire's traditional borders. At no time—not even in the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries—did the Byzantines abandon the idea that the empire included both East and West, that ideally its territories comprised Spain as well as Syria, and that the "Old Rome" somehow remained its historical source and symbolic center in spite of the transfer of the capital to Constantinople. There were theological polemics against the "Latins"; there was popular hatred against the "Franks," especially after the Crusades; there was resentment against the commercial colonization of Byzantine lands by the Venetians and the Genoese, but the ideal vision of the universal empire remained, expressed particularly in the exclusive "Roman" legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor. As late as 1393, patriarch Anthony of Constantinople, in his often-quoted letter to the grand-prince Basil I of Moscow urging him not to oppose the liturgical commemoration of the emperor in Russian churches, expresses the utterly unrealistic but firm conviction that the emperor is "emperor and *autokrator* of the Romans, that is of *all Christians*"; that "in every place and by every patriarch, metropolitan and bishop the name of the emperor is commemorated wherever there are Christians..." and that "even the Latins, who have no communion whatsoever with our Church, give to him the same subordination, as they did in past times, when they were united with us."<sup>4</sup> Characteristically, the patriarch maintains the existence of an imperial unity *in spite of the schism dividing the churches*.

One of the elements of this imperial—and therefore "ecumenical"—vision of the Christian world is the so-called "pentarchy," i.e., the idea that

<sup>4</sup> The Letter is preserved in the patriarchal register published by F. Miklosich and I. Müller, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* (quoted below as MM) I (Vienna, 1862), pp. 188-92. The relevant passages are translated in J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425)* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1909), pp. 106-9.

the "ecumenical" church is led by the five patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. The shaping of the "pentarchic" scheme took place already in the fourth century, with special privileges (πρεσβεία) being recognized as belonging to the primates of the most important cities of the empire: first to Rome, Alexandria and Antioch (council of Nicaea, 325); to Constantinople, as "New Rome" (council of Constantinople I, 381); and finally, also to Jerusalem (Epheusus, 431). A certain "sacralization" of the number "five" then occurs in the legislation of Justinian, sanctioned by the Council *in Trullo* (692).<sup>5</sup>

Was "pentarchy" then seen as an essential element of ecclesiology? Not really. But it became an important factor in the Byzantine understanding of an "ecumenical" council, which required the presence of the five patriarchs, or their representatives, even as the Eastern sees of Alexandria and Antioch had, in fact, ceased to be influential. In any case, in the Middle Ages, these two interconnected elements—the theoretical legitimacy of the Byzantine emperor over the West and a lingering respect for the pentarchy, of which the Roman bishop was the leading member—made it into a requirement that a properly *ecumenical* council include the bishop of Rome (in spite of the schism), and the four Eastern patriarchs (although three of them were now heading churches which were barely in existence at all).

I mentioned the "pentarchy" as a para-ecclesiological idea, because there were real ecclesiological concepts which Orthodox Byzantines took very seriously—for instance, the ability of the Orthodox Church to settle doctrinal issues in a final way, through a conciliar procedure which needed neither an "ecumenical" council, nor an intervention of the pentarchy. The so-called *Synodikon of Orthodoxy* was a major, periodically updated witness to that doctrinal assurance, without which a church could not be truly the Church.<sup>6</sup> Another important ecclesiological dimension which the Byzantines understood well—although they would be forced to depart from it in the late medieval period—is eucharistic communion as a

<sup>5</sup> Historical literature on the origins and significance of the "pentarchy" is abundant; for basic solution of many problems, the book by F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge MA, 1958) is most helpful; see also J. Meyendorff, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity* (New York, Sheed and Ward, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the critical edition of the *Synodikon* with French tr. and commentary by J. Gouillard in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 2 (Paris, 1967).

condition for conciliar activity. Indeed, the *koinonia* of the eucharistic gathering constituted the ground on which conciliarity found its "raison d'être."<sup>7</sup>

Be it as it may, an "ecumenical council," again uniting East and West, was seen in Byzantium as the most logical and, actually, necessary goal to be pursued, if unity was to be restored. There was even a precedent: the council of 879-80, which had sanctioned a reconciliation between pope John VIII and patriarch Photius. The council did apply to itself the title of "ecumenical" and actually fulfilled the institutional requirements of such a council. It is also often referred to, in Byzantine sources, as a "council of union." However, eucharistic communion was restored between Photius and the papal legates *before* the procedures themselves began,<sup>8</sup> so that the council itself was the council of a united church. In 1438, there was no eucharistic unity between East and West, which may partially explain why the precedent of 879-80 was not invoked by the Greeks during the preliminaries of Florence. Of course, the Byzantines knew also that the Latin side no longer considered the "Photian" council as valid,<sup>9</sup> and that it was therefore useless to represent it as an authority acceptable by both sides.

What is highly significant, however, is that throughout the fourteenth century—even after the Crusades, after the establishment of a Latin hierarchy in the East, after the failure of the Union of Lyons—the holding of a council of union was the major hope of the Byzantines, which they repeatedly proposed to the popes. There is no doubt, of course, that these proposals, as all the other union negotiations of the period, were heavily conditioned by the need to obtain Western help against the Turkish

<sup>7</sup> J. Zizioulas, "The Development of Conciliar Structures to the Time of the First Ecumenical Council," *Councils and the Ecumenical Movement* (WCC Studies, 5, Geneva 1968), p. 41.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the papal *Commonitorium* with detailed instructions to the legates, and F. Dvornik, *The Photian Schism. History and Legend* (Cambridge 1948), pp. 184-5.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Dvornik has shown convincingly, however, that the council of 879-80 was recognized in both East and West until the end of the eleventh century, when the Western Gregorian reformers of canon law replaced it in their lists with the "Ignatian" council of 869-70 (*The Photian Schism*, pp. 309-330). The Photian council is still mentioned as authoritative in the *Decretum* of Ivo of Chartres (1094). The issue was raised briefly in Florence, as Cesarini and Chrysoverges referred to the Ignatian council as the "eighth ecumenical," but faced a rebuttal from Mark Eugenikos, reminding them of its cancellation by the council of 879-80 (*Concilium Florentinum. Documenta et Scriptores. Series B, Vol. V. fasc. I, Acta graeca* (Rome 1952), pp. 90-1, 135).

advance. But the idea of a council was also pushed by the more responsible Orthodox circles, as a contrast to purely political schemes, such as those of emperor Michael VIII in the late thirteenth century, which would amount to direct and unconditional submission to papal authority.

There is no possibility to review all the proposals here,<sup>10</sup> but I will refer to a few, which are direct preliminaries to Florence.

1) In 1339 (or perhaps earlier), the famous Barlaam the Calabrian presented to the Constantinopolitan synod a project of union, based upon the tenure of a joint ecumenical council. He was allowed to carry his project to pope Benedict XII in Avignon. Barlaam had his own particular approach to the *filioque* issue, and he hoped that the trinitarian dispute could be marginalized and practically disregarded (provided the Latins suppress the *filioque* in the Creed!) during the projected council debates; but, for him, there was no way in which, without a council, a Union could be accepted in the East.<sup>11</sup> He was rebuked by Benedict XII, who would not admit any debate on truths already defined by the Roman see.<sup>12</sup>

2) If Barlaam can be considered a rather peripheral figure, this cannot be said of emperor John VI Cantacuzenus, a towering political and intellectual personality who patronized the monastic party and contributed to the final victory of Palamism in 1351. Immediately upon assuming power, following a civil war, in 1347, he entered into direct contact with pope Clement V, offering to hold a council, preferably in Constantinople, but possibly also in the Latin-held islands of Euboea, or Rhodes.<sup>13</sup> Reaching further to a delayed and noncommittal reaction of papal legates

10 Cf. a rather complete review in D. M. Nichol, "Byzantine Requests for an Oecumenical Council in the Fourteenth Century," *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum* I (Amsterdam, 1969), pp. 69-95 (repr. in D. M. Nichol, *Byzantium: Its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World. Collected Studies* [Variorum, London 1972]).

11 Cf. C. Gianelli, "Un progetto de Barlaam Calabro per l'Unione delle Chiese," *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati III* (=Studi e testi, 123) (Città del Vaticano, 1946), pp. 57-208 (repr. in C. Gianelli, *Scripta Minora* (= *Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici* X [Rome, 1963], pp. 47-89); the Latin text of Barlaam's address to the pope in PG 151, cols. 1331-42. On the unionist views of Barlaam see also J. Meyendorff "Un mauvais théologien de l'unité: Barlaam le Calabrais," in *L'Eglise et les églises*, II [Chevetogne, 1955], pp. 47-64 (repr. in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm* [Variorum, London 1974]).

12 On the subject of Barlaam's proposals, the pope wrote to king Philip of France in September 1339: *diximus diversitatem huiusmodi fore nullatenus in Ecclesia tolerandam* (Rayn. *Annales*, anno 1339, paragraph 27).

13 Texts of reports and letters in R. J. Loemertz "Ambassadeurs grecs auprès du pape Clément V (1348)," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 19 (1953), pp. 178-196.

in 1350, he kept insisting upon a council. Unlike Barlaam, he was not proposing to marginalize doctrinal issues, but expressed the need for a "correct definition of the faith." Explicitly condemning the ways used by his predecessor, Michael VIII, in imposing a settlement by force, he expresses readiness "to subscribe to whatever is agreed by the bishops and other experts in doctrine." Directly anticipating the negotiations which preceded Florence, he writes: "If the pope agrees, let us meet halfway, *at some point on the coast*, to which he could bring the western clergy and I the patriarchs and their bishops, and I believe that God will then guide us to the truth."<sup>14</sup> A reply came not from Clement V, but from his successor Innocent IV, only in 1352, expressing a somewhat presumptuous joy that Greeks may turn away from their "errors," but with no mention of a possible council.<sup>15</sup>

3) Cantacuzenus had another opportunity to develop his proposal in 1367, when—now a monk, but still bearing great influence in Byzantium—he met with another papal legate, Paul, who was also titular (Latin) patriarch of Constantinople. Using almost identical expressions as in 1350, he again rejects the idea of a union imposed by imperial decree, proclaims the need for a free theological debate on doctrinal issues, and, very significantly, stresses the need for a fully *representative* council. Recognizing that a purely "pentarchic" representation was insufficient—the actual authority of the Eastern patriarchs being purely nominal—he urges not only a full presence of metropolitans of the ecumenical patriarchate, including the "distant" metropolitans of Russia, Trebizond, Alania and Zecchia, but also that of the catholicos of Georgia, the patriarch of Trnovo and the "archbishop" of Serbia.<sup>16</sup> Again, the suggestion that the council be held either in Constantinople, or in a city "near the sea" anticipates the

14 Cantacuzenus, *Hist. IV*, 9, ed. Bonn, III, 59-60.

15 Quoted in R. J. Loemertz, "Ioannis de Fontibus Ord. Praedicatorum Epistula ad Abbatem et Conventum monasterii nescio cuius Constantinopolitani," in *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 30 (1960), p. 164.

16 Text published by J. Meyendorff, "Projets de concile oecuménique en 1367: Un Dialogue inédit entre Jean Cantacuzène et le légat Paul," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 14 (1960), pp. 147-77 (repr. in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Hesychasm* [Variorum, London, 1977]); also a commentary in J. Meyendorff, "Jean-Joasaph Cantacuzène et le projet de concile oecuménique en 1367," *Akten des XI. Intern. Byzantinisten Kongresses* [Munich, 1960], pp. 363-9. The title of "archbishop," in the case of Serbia, denotes the non-recognition of the "patriarchate" established by Stefan Dushan in 1346. But the conflict over the patriarchate of Pec was not a sufficient reason, in the eyes of Cantacuzenus, to exclude the Serbian church from the projected council.



pre-Florence negotiations. Cantacuzenus' proposals of 1367 came at a dramatic moment: his son-in-law, emperor John V Paleologus, had just returned from an unsuccessful and humiliating visit to Hungary, requesting military help, and meeting with stern refusal unless he converted to Roman Catholicism. The conservative, Palamite hierarchy of the Byzantine Church, headed by Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, fully supported the idea of a council. A letter of Philotheos to the archbishop of Ohrid is preserved, inviting him to the council and describing the project thus: "We agreed with the pope's envoys that if at the council it will appear from divine Scriptures that our doctrine is superior to that of the Latins, they will join us and share our confession [of faith]." <sup>17</sup> However, the proposal again met with a *non-possumus* of pope Urban V, expressed in personal letters addressed to the emperor, the patriarch and other Byzantine officials, and calling for unconditional "submission" to Rome.

4) The "Great Schism" of the West (1378-1417) radically changed the rules of the game, as far as the West was concerned. Eminent churchmen of the East began to nourish even greater hopes for a union council. For instance, we know of one attempt undertaken by metropolitan Cyprian of Kiev and all Russia in 1396. A Bulgarian by birth, Cyprian had belonged to the staff of patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos and was a close friend of the last patriarch of Trnovo, Euthymius. After great trials, provoked by the vicissitudes of Byzantine ecclesiastical diplomacy in Eastern Europe, he had assumed the see of Kiev, uniting under his jurisdiction all the dioceses of Rus', whether they were located in Muscovy, or in Polish-Lithuanian dominions. Keeping principal residence in Moscow, he often traveled to the "Western" parts of his metropolitanate and was "a great friend" (φίλος πολὺς) of King Jagiello of Poland, in spite of the latter's conversion from Orthodoxy to Roman Catholicism (1386). <sup>18</sup> It is doubtlessly in those parts of what was still called "Russia" by the Byzantines—a country led by a Roman Catholic monarch with conciliarist leanings and a very large Orthodox population—that Cyprian planned his council, jointly with

<sup>17</sup> MM I, p. 492.

<sup>18</sup> On Cyprian and his times, see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Crestwood, 1989), p. 226 ff; and D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 173-200. A full summary of biographical and documentary data by G. M. Prokhorov has also appeared in D. S. Likhachev, ed., *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, vyp. 2, 1 (Leningrad, 1988), pp. 464-475.

the king Jagiello. It is from patriarch Anthony of Constantinople that the rebuke came this time: in letters to Cyprian and the king, Anthony called the project inappropriate and requested military help instead. <sup>19</sup> But Cyprian's idea was not discarded immediately. Another—uncanonical—metropolitan of Kiev, Gregory Tsamblak, <sup>20</sup> visited the council of Constance in 1418, was solemnly received by pope Martin V, but also suggested that union negotiations include representatives of the entire Eastern church. <sup>21</sup>

5) The Byzantine hopes for an "ecumenical" council of union finally became a concrete possibility after the victory of conciliarism in Constance. Pope Martin V, elected at the council, was no longer in a position to require a simple acceptance of papal obedience by the Greeks, since he himself, in virtue of the conciliar decrees approved by him, was now bound to "obey" a council in matters of faith. In the negotiations which began in earnest, the old scheme proposed by Cantacuzenus in 1350, and again in 1367, always served as basis for the Greek position, particularly the point of holding a council in a city "near the sea," so that Eastern delegates could remain close enough to their ships, ready to return home in case of failure to unite. This point probably carried some weight, as the Greeks chose to hold the council with pope Eugenius rather than with the conciliarists of Basel, who were inviting them to travel to remote places beyond the Alps. Furthermore—also in accordance with the plans of Cantacuzenus—there was a serious effort made to have the Eastern delegation composed not simply on the basis of a formal representation of "four patriarchs," but more realistically and more inclusively. <sup>22</sup> Not only

<sup>19</sup> MM II, pp. 280-2, 282-5.

<sup>20</sup> A Bulgarian like Cyprian, whom he admired greatly, Gregory was one of the most prominent literary figures of the Slavic world. The Lithuanian grand-prince Vitovt had sponsored his election to the Kievan see by a council of West Russian bishops (1415) as a challenge to the Greek metropolitan Photius, who—as his predecessors did—resided in Moscow. The election was a direct challenge to the patriarchate, which was formally accused of simony, corruption and administrative inconsistency (text in A. Pavlov, ed., *Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka* (quoted as RIB below) VI, St. Petersburg, 1880, cols. 307-314. Understandably, Gregory was excommunicated by Photius and deposed by patriarch Joseph II in 1416 (texts, *ibid.* cols. 315-360).

<sup>21</sup> The visit is described in the Chronicle of the Council of Constance by Ulrich Richental (English tr. in L. R. Loomis, *The Council of Constance* [Columbia University Press, New York, 1961], pp. 105, 176-8) and in the *Gesta* of the council by the French cardinal Guillaume Filastre (*ibid.*, pp. 434-7).

<sup>22</sup> It was obvious to all that the representation of the barely surviving "Eastern" patriarchs could

were the “distant” metropolitans of Trebizond and, particularly, Russia, included, but also the metropolitan of Moldovlachia (Romania). The Balkan Slavic churches were already under Turkish rule, so nobody came from Serbia or Bulgaria (the metropolitan Ignatius of Trnovo, who was included, was not a patriarch, as in the time of Cantacuzenus, but a Greek bishop living in Constantinople); but, significantly, the presence of delegates from the catholicos of Georgia was secured. Important as it was, this geographical spread of the delegation was probably not as crucial as the task faced by the organizers to assure the participation of the various shades of theological opinion in the Byzantine church itself. Clearly, there were not many good theologians among the bishops, which was shown by the passive behavior of the majority at the council. So it was decided to perform a hasty consecration to important sees—Nicaea, Ephesus and Kiev—of two intellectual leaders, Bessarion and Mark, and one experienced diplomat, Isidore. All three ordinations were performed in 1437, on the very eve of the council. Thus the delegation included, in the person of Bessarion, an eminent “humanist” in the tradition of Metochites and Gregoras, as well as a legitimate spokesman of Palamite and monastic theology, in the person of Mark of Ephesus. The traditional or “conservative” trend was also strengthened by the inclusion of Athonite monks representing the monasteries of Great Lavra, Vatopedi and St Paul. There is ample evidence that popular Orthodox opinions really held, as did patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos in the fourteenth century, that a council could well bring about a victory for their views, so that the Latins would accept the Orthodox understanding of the *filioque* issue and of ecclesiology.<sup>23</sup> The hope that union would be discussed freely, in a conciliar way—and would not simply mean the acceptance of the “Latin” faith, through obedience to the pope—seemed assured by the participation of men like Mark of Ephesus. In spite of the bad experiences of the Crusades, the

only be nominal and determined not by those patriarchs themselves, but by the leadership in Constantinople. Proxies were appointed—Bessarion, Isidore, Mark, Dionysius of Sardis, Dositheus of Monembasia—but often shifted both before and during the council; cf. J. Gill, *The Council*, pp. 76, 111 n. 2, 295, etc.

<sup>23</sup> Such were, indeed, the hopes of Mark of Ephesus, expressed several times, and particularly in his written appeal to pope Eugenius at Ferrara, made at the suggestion of Cesarini (*Quae supersunt actorum graecorum concilii Florentini*, ed. G. Hofmann [Rome, 1955], pp. 28–34). Isidore also accepted the task of assuring a victory of Orthodoxy at the council, as he was convincing the grand-prince to support the council (cf. second *Sofiskaya Letopis'*, *Polnoe Sobranie Russkikh Letopisei* VI, col. 152).

Union of Lyons, and the various local situations—e.g., Hungarian dominions, or Cyprus, where Latinism was being imposed by force—many considered that a “victory” of Orthodoxy was still possible at a council. Furthermore, everyone understood that there had been a radical reversal in the attitude of the papacy, as it was now accepting the idea of a council where everything separating East and West would be unconditionally debated with equal opportunity given to both sides. Such was indeed the commitment of popes Martin V and Eugenius IV, who had accepted the “conciliarist” doctrine approved at Constance and at Basel, and who were therefore, in principle, ready to talk, and not only to dictate, as their predecessors Benedict XII and Urban V had done.

### *What Did Not Happen in Florence*

Looking at the debates in Florence, it would be fair to say that the council debated some issues without solving them, and solved others without debating them. The two longest and substantial theological debates were about purgatory and the *filioque*. The debate on purgatory manifested a basic difference in approaches to the doctrine of salvation and to theological methodology. It resulted in a definition which will have rather embarrassing consequences at the time of the Reformation, since it provided the theological basis for the doctrine of indulgences, and is hardly upheld today by the Roman Catholic *magisterium* (e.g., the affirmation that unbaptised souls “descend immediately to hell”). In the debate on the procession of the Holy Spirit, both sides lacked the historical perspective which allows us today to recognize fully the actual existence in the East and in the West of two divergent trinitarian theologies. Neither side was able to approach the real questions: are the two traditions both legitimate, and therefore complementary, or are they, in fact, incompatible? And, if both are legitimate, is it right to dogmatize one of them, as Florence eventually did?

The point that was solved at Florence was the issue of church government, which was being passionately debated in the West in the context of the “Great Schism” of 1378. The Conciliarist movement was offering a solution: the supremacy of councils over the pope. On the contrary, the council of Florence produced a definition using all the code words justifying papal monarchy: the pope is the “successor of Peter,” the “true vicar of

Christ," the "head of the whole Church," and possesses full power (*plena potestas*) in feeding and governing the universal church. At the council, the issue of Roman primacy and its nature was raised only in the days preceding the signing. What we know of the rather embarrassing last-minute discussions does not indicate that the Greeks had any real understanding of the Western controversies of the day, which were opposing the pope to the council of Basel. Their attitude was purely defensive; how to safeguard as much as possible a familiar Eastern church structure, based upon the canons of the ancient ecumenical councils and the pentarchy. They demanded and obtained that ambiguous references to those venerable and antiquated institutions be added to the clear and specific definition of papal power. Latins and Greeks could easily interpret these references in different ways. In any case, the unprecedented appointments following the council of two Eastern Metropolitans—Bessarion and Isidore—to the Roman cardinalate emphasized the fact that the papacy, as it was now defined by the council, was not the papacy of the early centuries but an institution radically reshaped by the Gregorian reformers, the decretalists of the thirteenth century, and the canonists of the fourteenth. Now it was also coming out victorious from the anti-conciliarist struggle.

Real church unity requires not only common formulae, aimed at resolving particular difficulties, but also a common *sensus ecclesiae*, a loving commitment to a jointly identifiable One Church. In order to achieve such common *sensus*, the council of Ferrara-Florence would have to have been an encounter between East and West, *as they really were* at the time. But this was very far from being the case. On the Eastern side, an effort was made by the authorities in Constantinople to gather a truly representative delegation, but it was only partially successful: the bulk of the group was made up of the immediate entourage of the emperor and the patriarch, i.e., an embattled remnant of desperate men from the surrounded and dying city of Constantinople. Only a few had any theological competence. Mark Eugenius was a rather lonely exception in that he undoubtedly had "roots" in the popular masses, and would later be trusted by those masses. On the Latin side, practically all bishops were Italians, with only a few isolated and rather unrepresentative prelates from France, Spain, Ireland, Portugal and Poland, but none from the Empire or England. Pope Eugenius was being challenged by the council of Basel and

was an exile even from Rome and the Papal states, where he was opposed by the Colonna family. The Latin theologians who acted as spokesmen at the council included only those who were, or had now become, strong supporters of the papal side against the Conciliarists. The first among them, Cesarini, had been a strong supporter of conciliarism at Basel, but had recently joined the papal side.

Under such conditions, was a dialogue in depth possible?

Actually, the Greeks themselves were not asking for serious dialogue. How much were they even informed about the deep crisis of the West? Their diplomats (including Isidore) had been in Constance and in Basel, but the intellectual and spiritual estrangement had gone too far for them to become aware of what was really happening intellectually, spiritually, theologically in the Western church. Of the great mass of contemporary Latin writings—especially those concerned with church structure and church reform—nothing was translated into Greek. Those few Greek intellectuals who knew Latin seemed to have been impressed with the basically positive approach of Latin Scholasticism towards Greek philosophy, but never understood the institutional implications of Western theological developments of their time.

As is well known, the debate in the West was about power in the church and in society at large. Forms of power, were defined primarily *in legal terms*, whether one spoke of the power of kings, the "apostolic" power of the pope, or the collective power of councils. Some scholars support the view that Thomism, with its doctrine of natural law, had already provided the philosophical basis for "secularizing" power, even if, for Thomas, God was the Creator of nature (and of "natural" power), and power was autonomous only relatively. Be it as it may, the link between God and "nature" was severed by the prevailing influence, in the fourteenth century, of Marsilius of Padua and William of Okham, who promoted a "natural" view of society, of which the visible church itself was a part, and where power structures and inter-personal relations were to be regulated by law.<sup>24</sup> It is, of course, questionable whether Thomism is directly to blame for the secularization of church structures in the West in the Middle Ages; but, in order to ascertain the dimensions

<sup>24</sup> Cf. particularly W. Ullman, *Medieval Political Thought* (Peregrine Books, New York, 1975), pp. 184-5. Cf. also *Origins of the Great Schism* (Archon Books, New York, 1967), particularly the Appendix on cardinal Zabarella, pp. 191-231.

of the problem, one would have needed a dialogue, in Florence, between Thomists and Palamites, which came out from time to time in the discussions, but was deliberately mooted, in order to avoid facing directly another point of formal theological disagreement between the two sides.<sup>25</sup> In fact, nobody either desired, or was ready for a dialogue of this sort.

Thomism or not, it is obvious that, since the eleventh century, the papacy had assumed a new and much more "secular" role in the West,<sup>26</sup> and that this new power—although it was supported by the same scriptural and patristic arguments as the old Roman primacy—had assumed features directly inspired by imperial monarchy. In this context, ecclesiological and canonical thought in the West began systematically to define papal *jurisdictional and administrative power, as clearly distinct from his sacramental functions as bishop of Rome*. The notion of *Corpus Christi*—a eucharistic, biblical concept—was gradually applied not only to the Church as sacramental community, but to the universal Christian society. The Eucharist was still the "true" body of Christ (*Corpus verum*), but the universal church, including "the gigantic legal and economic management on which the *Ecclesia militans* rested,"<sup>27</sup> and of which the pope was the visible head, was the "mystical body" (*corpus mysticum*).

The notion that the pope's "power of jurisdiction" was independent of his "power of ordination" (possessed by any bishop) was greatly enhanced in the fourteenth century when the actual residence of the pope was not Rome—of which he was bishop—but Avignon. Canonists began to debate the question: who possesses the "power of jurisdiction" during a vacancy of the papal throne, and some answered: the college of cardinals. Understandably, the cardinals liked the idea of exercising such powers, as

25 Cf. J. Gill, *Florence*, pp. 205-6, 225, 267.

26 "The eleventh century began with a flourishing empire in the East and a weakened and ineffectual papacy in the West. It ended with a supremely powerful papacy in the West and an empire struggling hard to reassert itself and repair its fallen fortunes in the East. Whatever one may think about the schism of 1054, whether it was the final act that rent the garment of Christ, or whether it was merely an unfortunate if symptomatic incident, it is significant that it occurred in the middle of that century..." (D. M. Nicol, "Byzantium and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* XIII [1962], p. 20).

27 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton NJ, 1957), p. 197; cf. also H. de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1949), who writes about *un curieux chassé-croisé* in this development (p. 88); and G. B. Ladner, "The concepts: Ecclesia, Christianitas, Plenitudo Potestatis," in *Sacerdozio e regno da Gregorio VII a Bonifacio VIII* (Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae, XVIII, Rome, 1954), pp. 49-77.

extensively as they could, and this led to long vacancies... Furthermore, it was admitted that a pope, from the moment of his election, was already fully empowered jurisdictionally, even if he was not yet a bishop. He would rule the church even if his episcopal consecration was postponed for months. From these approaches, John of Paris could conclude that "the power of jurisdiction could be conferred solely by human election and consent."<sup>28</sup> It is understandable therefore that those who in the West were opposed to papal power, appalled by its abuses and confident in the "will of the people," would end up with a "conciliar theory," affirming that the pope, in his jurisdictional, administrative and magisterial powers, is responsible before a general council, since those powers are granted to him by election. It is this theory which was endorsed at Constance and at Basel, following the "Great Schism," setting up a system of church government, also rather secular<sup>29</sup> (or relatively speaking "democratic"), and rejecting papal monarchy...

It does not seem that there was any real awareness of any of these developments among the Byzantines; or, if there was, it did not contribute to their arguments in Florence at all. And yet, was it possible to achieve a common *sensus ecclesiae* without some common understanding of the issue of power in the church, which was creating such turmoil and schism in the West?

Seeing the historical situation in perspective, one can understand the reason why the Greeks finally chose the papal side to hold the council. Not only were they given the possibility of holding the assembly in a city "near the sea," but also the system prevailing at Basel, with representation by "nations," seemed to be incompatible with the self-conscious affirmations that the Byzantine emperor was still the nominal head of universal Christendom and that the Eastern delegation represented the "other half" of the Church. It would appear that if the Greeks had come to Basel, they would be seated only as one of the "nations"... In Ferrara, recognition was given both to the imperial dignity of John VIII Palaeologus and to the "pentarchy" of patriarchs. An acceptable protocol, but no ecclesiological debate...

28 Cf. B. Tierney, *Foundations of the Conciliar Theory. The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955), p. 175.

29 According to B. Tierney, it follows the models of medieval corporation law (*ibid.*).

And yet, there is no doubt that an Eastern participation in the controversies which were tearing apart Western Christendom could have been eminently constructive, overcoming at least some of the contradictions and restoring balance.

Going today through the initial positions of condemned heretics, like Wiclif and the Hussites, or Joachim of Fiore; or trying to establish parallels between the witness of the Franciscan Spirituals, and many unconventional, but widely accepted forms of Eastern monastic spirituality; or looking objectively at the critical, and in general very "Western" understandings of the early Christian tradition, as they are expressed by Marsilius of Padua, or John of Paris, one cannot fail but to face a real spiritual tragedy: none of those Western Christians, whose intentions were often so very authentic, had any real knowledge of the Christian East, and they were thus denied any ecclesiological alternative to the most authoritarian forms of the medieval papal system.<sup>30</sup> Equally tragic was the strictly defensive, uninformed and somewhat provincial attitude of the Eastern churchmen who came to Ferrara-Florence: hard-pressed by their own concerns, they were obviously incapable of understanding the true realities of Western Christendom.

But perhaps it is unfair to blame them for ignoring the intellectual and spiritual movements of Northern and Central Europe. What they could have done, however—on the basis of their own tradition, which they knew well—was to produce a diagnosis of the doctrine of papal power, as it was presented to them at the council, and focus the debate on the real issue: the dichotomy between the sacramental functions (*potestas ordinationis*) and the magisterial powers of the pope. Indeed, if there was an

<sup>30</sup> Belated contacts were established in 1451 between the Utraquist Moravians and the anti-unionist Orthodox of Constantinople, headed, after the death of Mark of Ephesus, by Gennadius Scholarios. One Constantine Platris, a Utraquist priest, was even formally accepted into the Orthodox Church in Constantinople (cf. M. Paulová, "L'empire byzantin et les Tchèques avant la chute de Constantinople," *Byzantinoslavica* XIV [1953], pp. 158-225). But the contact obviously came too late and it occurred outside of the "ecumenical" context, which could have existed earlier. Actually it is the decree of Florence which made "ecumenical" spirit impossible. Recently a parallelism was established by the late L. M. Clucas, between Byzantine hesychasm and the theories of Joachim of Fiore ("Eschatological Theory in Byzantine Hesychasm: A Parallel to Joachim da Fiore," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 70, 2 [1977]), pp. 324-46. But direct contacts are very unlikely. For a helpful and well documented review of Western trends opposed to papal authoritarianism, see G. Leff, "The Apostolic Ideal in Later Medieval Ecclesiologies," *Journal of Theological Studies* 18 (1967), pp. 58-82.

ecclesiological tradition, firmly upheld in the East, it was that such a dichotomy is impossible.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the unity of the sacramental and magisterial powers of all the bishops can be seen in the prevailing Byzantine arguments against the claims of medieval Roman primacy. The argument consists in denying that the apostle Peter belongs *only* to Rome, not only because he had been in Jerusalem and in Antioch (Acts 1-10, 15, etc.) before coming to the imperial capital, but because Peter is the model of *every bishop* within his community. This early Christian idea was formulated most clearly by Cyprian in the third century: every bishop, presiding over his diocese, occupies the "chair of Peter."<sup>31</sup> It recurs in most unexpected contexts, including hagiography. According to St Gregory of Nyssa, Christ "through Peter gave to the bishops the keys of heavenly honors,"<sup>32</sup> and even Pseudo-Dionysius refers to the image of Peter, when he describes his ecclesiastical "hierarchy."<sup>33</sup> Actually, this view of the ministry of Peter, perpetuated in all bishops, inherited from Cyprian, was prevailing in the West as well, as shown by the numerous texts patiently collected by Y. Congar.<sup>34</sup> The idea that there was a "Petrine" power independent of and separable from the sacramental perpetuation of the episcopate is totally foreign to this early Christian ecclesiology.

Whenever the Byzantines discussed directly the succession of Peter in the Church, they emphasized the *universal* ministry of all the apostles, including Peter; the distinctive, and always *local* and sacramental ministry of the bishops, inseparable from each bishop's community; the fact that Rome cannot claim the succession of Peter for itself alone, and that such a succession, in Rome as elsewhere, is conditioned by the confession of Peter's faith; and finally, that every bishop orthodox in faith, possesses "the power of the keys" conferred by Christ to Peter.<sup>35</sup> It is interesting to note that practically all these arguments are also used by Marsilius of Padua,<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> After the studies of A. d'Alès, P. -Th. Camelot and, particularly, P. Bévenot on the ecclesiology of Cyprian, there cannot be any doubt any more about his conception of the *cathedra Petri* in his writings.

<sup>32</sup> *De cast.* PG 46, col. 312C.

<sup>33</sup> *De eccl. hier.* VII, 7, PG 3, col. 561-4.

<sup>34</sup> *L'ecclésiologie du haut Moyen-Age* (Paris, Cerf, 1968), pp. 138-51.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. a review of all these arguments of Byzantine polemicists, including in the fourteenth century, Barlaam the Calabrian and Nilus Cabasilas, in my article "St Peter in Byzantine Theology," in J. Meyendorff, ed., *The Primacy of Peter* (St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), pp. 67-90.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. G. Leff, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3.



with the difference that Marsilius admits the separation between the sacramental and the jurisdictional powers and, consequently, looks for an administrative system based not upon sacramental charismata, but upon a representative system, created by the *congregatio fidelium*, directly anticipating the Protestant Reformation.

It is clear, therefore, that an authentic ecclesiological encounter between East and West in the fifteenth century would not have resulted in an endorsement of Western conciliarism by the East. Just as the Orthodox-Roman Catholic dialogue today, it would have looked for models of ecclesial polity in the first millennium. The Greek delegation attempted to do exactly that when the text on Roman primacy was offered for its signature, at the very end of the council. Practically at the last minute, reference was made in the decree to the "acts" of the ecumenical councils and to "holy canons" as the framework in which the papal *plena potestas* was to be exercised. But, read by the Westerners, the reference was quite innocuous, since all the papal terminology, with its key concepts, was fully integrated in the decree. The council had fully disavowed conciliarism and, as historians recognize today, its only historical achievement was to salvage papal power—until the moment when it would be challenged even more radically a century later.

### *The Orthodox World ca. 1440 and the Russian Reaction*

I have emphasized earlier that a real effort was made by the Byzantine political and ecclesiastical leadership to assure that the delegation going to the council was fully representative of various groups and trends of Eastern Christianity. However, looking at the Orthodox world as it existed in the mid-fifteenth century, one can immediately discover the psychological and institutional gap which existed between the relatively narrow group of officials who came to Ferrara, and the masses of clergy and faithful living under Muslim occupation or in Russia. Besieged in a city practically devoid of inhabitants,<sup>37</sup> the imperial court and the patriarchate, while keeping their symbolic prestige, represented a small elite group which had everything to lose if the Turks occupied the city. The masses, on the contrary—both in Asia Minor and the Middle East and, more

<sup>37</sup> The population of Constantinople had shrunk to no more than 50,000.

recently, in the Balkans—were already accepting the need to survive under Muslim rule.<sup>38</sup> It is important to remember that the majority of the soldiers who composed the army of Muhammed the Conqueror in 1453 were Christians, recruited in conquered imperial territories. It was these people, as well as the distant societies of Russia, Georgia, or Trebizond, who had to be won to the cause of union if the council was to be accepted by the church as a whole. It is fully understandable that for this bulk of Orthodox population, the negative message brought from Florence by Mark of Ephesus, supported as he was by the spiritually influential monastic communities, was much more understandable and acceptable than the idea of papal rule. The Orthodox faith could not be betrayed for the sake of the questionable and problematic survival of a dying empire.

The Russian reaction should be interpreted in the same perspective: However, the often-held view, according to which the grand-prince of Moscow was waiting for an opportunity to proclaim himself the savior of true Orthodoxy, in opposition to both Byzantium and the West, represents a historical anachronism. The Muscovite religious and political self-affirmation, which soon took messianic forms with the theory of a "Third Rome," is the consequence, not the cause, of the events of mid-fifteenth century.

Still under control by the Mongols, the grand-principality of Moscow was, in 1425-47, in the midst of a long and bloody dynastic crisis. Grand-prince Basil II was blinded by his competition, Dimitri Shemiaka (1446), before finally recovering his throne. Throughout the fourteenth century, in spite of several critical conflicts, the patriarchate of Constantinople had strengthened its administrative control over what the Byzantine sources always called "Russia" (Ῥωσία)—a country politically divided between the Muscovite grand-principality, Lithuania and Poland. This control was exercised by the "metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia" who—with the patriarchate's blessing—resided in Moscow. This implied Byzantine political support for Muscovy. Such support became particularly significant after 1386, a year when Lithuania and Poland were reunited as a single Roman Catholic monarchy, and the grand-prince of Moscow acquired

<sup>38</sup> As early as 1354, St Gregory Palamas, a prisoner of the Turks for a year, writes back to his church in Thessalonica, describing the comparatively prosperous Christian existence under Ottoman rule.

a certain monopoly of Orthodoxy. The impressive figures of two metropolitans of Kiev—Cyprian (1375-1406) and Photius (1408-31)—endorsed and developed contacts and solidarity between Constantinople and Moscow, while also being very concerned with the fate of the vast Orthodox population in Lithuania and Poland, where they both traveled repeatedly.<sup>39</sup> It is there—not in Muscovy—that took place a first, but very short-lived, rebellion against Byzantine ecclesiastical control, with the uncanonical election of a separate metropolitan, Gregory Tsamblak (1414-8), who, as we saw earlier, paid a visit to the Council of Constance (1417).

In 1437, grand-prince Basil renewed his loyalty to the Byzantine authorities by accepting another Greek, Isidore, as metropolitan. The policy of alternating Greek and Russian incumbents, followed throughout the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries,<sup>40</sup> would have required a Russian candidate to follow Photius, who had died in 1431. Indeed, the appointment of a Russian metropolitan—the bishop of Smolensk, Gerasim, nominated from Lithuania—had taken place in Constantinople, but during his brief tenure (1434-5) he did not extend his jurisdiction over Moscow, but only over the dioceses of Lithuania and Novgorod.

Upon Isidore's appointment, the Muscovite grand-prince supported the projects of church union with money and allowed a big delegation (with 200 horses) to travel to the council. By the time Isidore returned (1441), the Muscovite authorities must have received much information about the existing Greek opposition to the decree of Florence and the regrets expressed by many signatories. No particular "messianic," anti-Byzantine or anti-Western mood was needed to explain the expulsion of Isidore, especially since the expulsion was followed by almost eight years of a wait-and-see attitude.

Since the Union had not yet been officially proclaimed, the grand-prince chose diplomatically to ignore it. In 1441, in a highly respectful

<sup>39</sup> Cf. in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Crestwood, 1989), particularly pp. 245-60.

<sup>40</sup> On this deliberate policy, witnessed to by a text of Nicephorus Gregoras, and its importance for the links between Constantinople and Moscow, see D. Obolensky, "Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: A Study of Ecclesiastical Relations," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* XI (1957), pp. 23-78 (repr. in D. Obolensky, *Byzantium and the Slavs* [St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1994]), and J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

letter to patriarch Metrophanes, the grand-prince begged the patriarch to authorize the appointment of a metropolitan, effected in our own country. The need for a long and difficult voyage (to Constantinople and back), the invasion of Godless Agarenes upon our Christian world, the troubles and fights occurring in neighboring countries and the multiplication of powers, are the reasons for our request.<sup>41</sup>

Metrophanes was a supporter of the Union, and obviously did not reply.

In 1448, finally, Jonas was enthroned as "metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia" by a synod of Russian bishops. But the Russian authorities continued to follow a deliberately "naive" diplomacy. In 1451, Basil sent a letter to the new Byzantine emperor Constantine, addressing him with all the customary titles. "We beg your Holy Majesty," he wrote,

not to accuse us of spite, because we acted as we did, without consulting your great Lordship... [Even now, after Jonas' enthronement], the most holy metropolitanate of Russia requests and seeks the blessing of the holy ecumenical, catholic and apostolic church of the Wisdom of God, in Constantinople and submits itself to it in accordance to ancient orthodoxy.

Basil then alludes significantly to "disagreements which appeared of late," and uses a last argument to explain why no communication took place with the patriarchate: "We do not know whether there is a patriarch in the Queen-city, because we heard nothing from him or from anyone and we do not know his name..."<sup>42</sup> There was truth in this last statement, since the pro-Union patriarch Gregory had been forced to leave the capital in 1451 for Rome, and no successor had been elected.

Further enhancing Moscow's position was the fact that the election of Jonas was recognized in Polish-Lithuanian territories. King Casimir IV, a supporter of the council of Basel, had officially granted him investiture,<sup>43</sup> and Jonas formally assumed jurisdiction over the Orthodox dioceses in Lithuania and Poland, as well as in Muscovy.

<sup>41</sup> Text in RIB VI, cols. 525-36.

<sup>42</sup> Text *ibid.*, 583-6. One of the existing copies of this letter carries the notice "Not dispatched." This notice is the main argument used by Ya. S. Lur'e to cast doubt on the authenticity of all the official correspondence between Moscow and Constantinople in 1448-1453 (in D. S. Likhachev, ed., *Slovar knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi*, vyp. 2 [Leningrad, 1988], pp. 420-2, and his study "Kak ustanovilas' avtokefaliia russkoi tserkvi v XV-m veke?", *Vspomogatel'nye istoricheskie dissipliny* CCIII [Leningrad, 1991], pp. 181-198). However, whether the letters were sent or not, they clearly represent the official wait-and-see posture adopted in Moscow during the period. But Lur'e shows rather convincingly that there was no official commitment of Constantinople to appoint Jonas as a successor of Isidore.

<sup>43</sup> RIB, VI, cols. 563-72.

Compared with the direct confrontations with Constantinople which accompanied the establishment of independent patriarchates in Bulgaria and Serbia, Moscow's action in 1448—given especially the formal pretext given by unforeseen circumstances of the Union—is in fact marked by a certain nostalgia for the good times, when the church of Constantinople exercised a motherly authority in Russia. However different, more nationalistic sounds are also being heard, even if they are not immediately endorsed in official circles. They appear in two sets of sources:

1) The reports of Russian clerics who had accompanied Isidore to Florence indicate that they had followed the leadership of their metropolitan at the council and, in the case of bishop Avraamy of Suzdal', had formally signed the decree. Just as the Greek bishops and officials who decided to renounce their signatures upon their return, these Russian clerics had to present a plausible reason for their vagaries. The Greeks usually—and unconvincingly—referred to physical and moral blackmail exercised upon them by the Latins. The Russians invoked the callousness of Isidore and the "betrayal" of the Greeks. One author, rhetorically addressing emperor John VIII Palaeologus, exclaims: "What have you done? You have exchanged light for darkness; instead of divine law you have received the Latin faith; instead of truth and righteousness, you have loved flattery and falsity."<sup>44</sup> And since the Byzantine themselves had taught the Russians that the emperor of Constantinople was the "emperor of all Christians": that "it was impossible for Christians to have the Church, but not to have the emperor"; but also that "Christians reject heretical emperors"<sup>45</sup>—an obvious and inevitable basis existed for the idea of a *translatio imperii*. Since Basil II of Moscow had upheld the true faith, he was now a "new Constantine," the "great sovereign, God-crowned Russian tsar."<sup>46</sup> Metropolitan Jonas, writing to prince Alexander of Kiev, was also attributing to Basil II the merit of imitating his "ancestors"—the holy emperor Constantine and the prince St Vladimir.<sup>47</sup>

44 *Slovo izbrano*, ed. A. N. Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnyi obzor drevnerusskikh polemicheskikh sochinenii protiv Latinian* (Moscow, 1875), pp. 372-3. For a convenient review of the literature, see M. Cherniavsky, "The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow," *Church History* 24 (1955), 1, pp. 347-59.

45 Cf. the famous letter of patriarch Anthony to Basil I of Moscow written in 1391 (cf. above, note 4). On the circumstances of the letter and the probable role of metropolitan Cyprian, see J. Meyendorff, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-6.

46 *Slovo izbrano*, ed. *cit.*, p. 113.

47 Letter of 1451, RIB, VI, col. 559-60.

2) This attitude of self-affirmation would be greatly strengthened following the fall of Constantinople (1453) and the appointment in 1458 of a separate metropolitan of Kiev within the domain of king Casimir of Poland, who, by now, had fully recognized Roman authority. The consecration of the new metropolitan—Gregory Bolgarin, a former deacon of Isidore—was performed by the uniate patriarch of Constantinople Gregory Mammas, now in exile in Rome. This action was taken in virtue of a decree of pope Calixtus III, ecclesiastically dividing "superior Russia," governed "by the schismatic monk Jonas, son of iniquity," and "inferior Russia," with the new metropolitan Gregory in Kiev under Polish rule.<sup>48</sup> The decree illustrated how little practical regard the pope had for the decree of Florence, which guaranteed the "rights and privileges" of the Eastern patriarchs: the metropolitanate of Kiev was being divided by papal decree, not by a decision of the patriarch (even Uniate), although the latter did perform Gregory's consecration. At the time, however, the decree had little effect. The new metropolitan Gregory defected from papal jurisdiction in 1470 and recognized the authority of the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople, now under Turkish rule. In Moscow, however, official documents began to issue stern warnings against "Gregory, the most evil disciple of Isidore, who came to Lithuania from Rome."<sup>49</sup> Eventually, however, since the Orthodoxy of the metropolitan of Kiev was not in question after 1470, the title of "Kiev" was quietly dropped from the title of the "metropolitans of all Russia" residing in Moscow,<sup>50</sup> which meant a *de facto* recognition of a separate metropolitanate of Kiev under Constantinople.

Under Basil II's son, Ivan III, the "Great," the Muscovite principality began to grow into a real empire. Ideas suggesting a *translatio imperii* were not discouraged, but never formally assumed by the grand-princes. They appeared not only in the writings of the monk Philotheus of Pskov—suggesting that Moscow is the "third," but also the "last" Rome, because the Second Coming is near—but also in the diplomatic correspondence of

48 *Documenta Pontificum romanorum Historiam Ucrainae illustrantia*, no. 82, p. 46. Cf. an informed discussion of these events in O. Halecki, *From Florence to Brest* (Sacrum Poloniae Millennium, Rome, 1958), pp. 84-6.

49 Letter of Metropolitan Jonas to bishops in Lithuania, RIB, VI, col. 621.

50 *Quando stirps mascula deesset imperatoria, ad vestram Illustrissimam Dominationem jure vestri faustissimi conjugii pertineret*, quoted in A. Ia. Shpakov, *Gosudarstvo i tserkov' v ikh vzaimnykh otnosheniakh v moskovskom gosudarstve I* (Kiev, 1904), p. xviii.

the Venetian Senate, addressed to Ivan in connection with his marriage with Zoe-Sophia, niece of the last Byzantine emperor.<sup>51</sup> However, at no time was the *translatio imperii* made into official political doctrine: the Russian tsars never assumed the title of "Roman emperors"—as a formal *translatio* would demand—and understood their title to signify the establishment of a *national* tsardom "of all Russia," not a universal Christian empire. Thus Ivan IV made sure to obtain the blessings of the Eastern patriarchs following his coronation in 1547, and the establishment of the patriarchate of Moscow in 1588 was performed by patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople. In terms of the overall history of the church of Russia, the severance of administrative ties with Constantinople was historically, at one time or another, inevitable. The Eastern Christian tradition of visualizing world Christendom as an association of local churches united in faith and sacraments was a general pattern which had to apply to Russia. However, in practice, the election of Jonas in 1448 implied that the church would become subservient at least in its leadership, to the arbitrary, increasingly secularized and growing power of the tsars. It would lack the independence which the "metropolitans of Kiev and all Russia" enjoyed when they could act as representatives of a distant Byzantine center, and preserve the universal, trans-national and trans-ethnic mission of the church in Eastern Europe.

### *Conclusion: What about Florence?*

As I have tried to show in this paper, an ecumenical council of union represented an authentic hope, upheld in Eastern Christendom by many of its best leaders and theologians in the period following the Crusades. The council, which was eventually held in Ferrara-Florence, reflected, on the other hand, an authentic concession of the West to the ecclesiological positions of the East: the council met, at least in principle, as the "Eighth" council, with the theoretical possibility of solving *all* the problems which divided the churches, and without being bound by unilateral Western solutions which had been adopted between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries.

And yet the tragedy occurred because no authentic encounter of the two traditions took place. The inner ferment of the West—inherently a

<sup>51</sup> Metropolitan Theodosius (1461-4) still used it, but not Philip I (1467-73).

result of the ecclesiological imbalance connected with the schism between East and West—was not even envisaged. And the Eastern delegation had neither the theological ability, the necessary information, nor the spiritual courage to confront the real issues.

It can be said, in fact, that in 1438-9 the two halves of Christendom were much more estranged from each other than they are *today*. Indeed, if one considers those Orthodox who are truly concerned with the "catholic" dimension of Orthodoxy and thus feel responsible for the cause of Christian unity; if, on the other hand, one appeals to the knowledge and spiritual experience of the—unfortunately rather narrow—circle of Roman Catholic leaders, scholars and theologians, who understand the nature and implications of the Orthodox ecclesial experience, a real dialogue is, indeed, possible. As Florence, seen in historical perspective, appears to us as a failure for reasons—spiritual and theological—which we are able to understand, the responsibility for solving the issues, which are still with us today, becomes even greater.

## From Byzantium to Russia: Religious and Cultural Legacy<sup>1</sup>

“Tsar’grad”—the Imperial City—was seen by medieval Slavs as the unquestioned and unquestionable center of the world, the source of their Christian identity, and the cultural standard by which their own cultural models were to be evaluated. Neither Kiev nor Moscow were ever formally parts of the Byzantine empire, and therefore never fought—as Bulgarians and Serbians did—to free themselves from direct Byzantine political control. This explains the fact that the Byzantine ecclesiastical administration was accepted for so long in the lands of Rus’, and ended in Muscovy only as a consequence of the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century. Russian medieval texts do, of course, also reflect a trend towards national self-affirmation, but such trends were never directly anti-Byzantine. Between the tenth and the fifteenth centuries, for almost five hundred years, *loyalty* to the Byzantine legacy was the underlying fact of Russian culture, with tensions and hostile incidents being the exception rather than the rule.

This cultural, religious and emotional connection of Russia with Byzantium is rooted first of all in the adoption by Prince Vladimir of Kiev of Byzantine Christianity as the official religion of the Kievan state.

As we mark this year the Millennium of Russian Christianity, the famous words of Prince Vladimir’s ambassadors, reporting to their master after their visit to Constantinople in 987, are being quoted almost too often: “We went to Greece,” they reported,

and the Greeks led us to the edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it. We know only that God dwells there among men, and their services are fairer than the ceremonies of other nations. For we cannot forget the beauty.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> First published in W. Heller, ed., *Tausend Jahre Christentum in Russland* (Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1988), pp. 85-102.

<sup>2</sup> “Povest’ vremennykh let,” tr. in S. H. Cross, *The Russian Primary Chronicle* (Cambridge, MA:



In the same account of the baptism of Russia, reported by the *Primary Chronicle*, there is the long discourse of an anonymous Greek "philosopher." Addressed to the prince, this discourse is presented as having had a decisive influence upon the final decision by Vladimir to accept Christianity. If the ambassadors were impressed by the esthetic splendor of St Sophia and the beauty of the Byzantine liturgy, the prince himself came to recognize the intellectual superiority of Christian "philosophy" described to him by the Greek scholar.

The *Chronicle's* account of those events involves some embellished mythology, but it also reflects historical and psychological reality: the cultural, esthetical and intellectual fascination of Kievan Russia with the ancient superior civilization of Christian Byzantium.

There is no doubt that the marriage of Prince Vladimir to the sister of the greatest of all medieval Byzantine emperors, Basil II, contributed greatly to the establishment of permanent cultural ties. The marriage went directly against the stern and proud protocol of the Byzantine court: Basil's grandfather, Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, had strictly forbidden marriages between female members of the Byzantine imperial family and "barbarian" rulers. Constantine had allowed some tolerance only for marriages with Frankish princes, because of the notion that they, in a sense, could still be considered as Romans.<sup>3</sup> Of course, the marriage of Vladimir with the Greek princess was the result of political necessity and was conditioned by Vladimir's Christian baptism, but as a result, the Kievan prince could not be considered simply a "barbarian": he was now the emperor's brother-in-law, which placed upon him cultural obligations.

Vladimir, and also particularly his son Iaroslav, successfully fulfilled such obligations. Witnessing to their efforts is Kiev's Cathedral of St Sophia, decorated by the best mosaicists imported from Byzantium as well as by local artists. Writers and rhetoricians of Kievan Rus' also imitated Byzantine models. Emulating Byzantium was always their goal, even when—as in the case of metropolitan Hilarion, appointed metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia in 1051—their immediate topic was the exaltation of local Kievan interests and ambitions.

Harvard University Press, 1930), p. 198.

3 *De administrando imperio* 13, ed. and tr. by Gy. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, Dumbarton Oaks Texts (Washington, D.C. 1967), p. 71.

What is also significant is that admiration of Byzantine models continued for centuries. In the fourteenth century, when the empire was already impoverished, underpopulated and humiliated, Russian pilgrims and travelers to Constantinople continued to express unreserved admiration. Stephen of Novgorod (ca. 1350) admired the "wondrous size, height and beauty" of the big column standing in front of St Sophia, and on top of it—the "marvelous, lifelike" statue of Justinian the Great.<sup>4</sup> Ignatius, bishop of Smolensk, describes with equal wonder the ceremonies and the "indescribable, unusual music" performed at the coronation of Emperor Manuel II (1392), to which he was a witness.<sup>5</sup> And all Russian pilgrims never tire of interminable descriptions of holy places, miraculous icons and relics seen and venerated in "Tsar'grad."

This powerful religious connection was, of course, strengthened by the fact that the metropolitans of Kiev and all Russia (*vseia Rusi*)—the heads of a Church extending from the Carpathian Mountains to the Northern forests, and from the Baltic to the Lower Volga—were appointed from Constantinople between 988 and 1448. More than often, they were Greeks themselves, bringing with them clergy, artists and diplomats. Even on the level of political structures, not only the independent Kievan Rus', but also the Russian principalities, which since 1238–40 fell under Mongol rule, considered themselves, by virtue of their Christianity, as parts of the Byzantine *oikoumene*. The dynastic blood-relationship established between the Byzantine imperial house and Prince Vladimir was occasionally renewed by other marital unions, but—more importantly—all the Russian princes, whether they were actually related to the Byzantine emperors or not, considered themselves as junior members of a princely family headed by the emperor. The sovereign of Constantinople addressed them as his "nephews,"<sup>6</sup> whereas Russian princes, when writing to him, used most deferential titles, in strict conformity with Byzantine court

4 G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travellers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, XIX (Washington, D.C. 1984), p. 28.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 176.

6 See e.g., the "chrysobull" (imperial decree with a golden seal) issued by Emperor John VI Cantacuzenus in August 1347 concerning the unity of the Russian metropolitanate, in K. E. Zachariae v. Lingenthal, ed., *Jus graecoromanum* (Leipzig, 1856–84), III, 701; also in F. Miklosich and I. Müller, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* (Vienna, 1862), I, 268; tr. in J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia: A Study of Byzantino-Russian Relations in the Fourteenth Century* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), p. 281.

protocol.<sup>7</sup> They seem to have accepted without protest the solemn declaration of Ecumenical Patriarch Anthony IV in 1393 that the Byzantine emperor is "elected emperor and autocrator of *the Romans, that is all Christians*," and that consequently, Orthodox Christian Russia must continue the solemn liturgical commemoration of his name in the liturgy.<sup>8</sup>

Nationalistic historiography tends to underestimate Byzantine cultural influence in medieval Russia. Indeed, the real importance of this influence can be ascertained only if one accepts a broader definition of what "culture" means, and if one also admits religion as a central and overwhelmingly important factor in the life of medieval society. It is through religion, and primarily through the agency of the Church, that Byzantine influence was a determining factor in Russian culture. As we celebrate the millennium of Christianity in Russia, we should remember that during *almost half* of this millennium the church in Russia was an ecclesiastical province of the patriarchate of Constantinople (988-1448), and that even after assuming ecclesiastical independence, or "autocephaly," the Muscovite church continued to pattern its practices, its ethics and its ideological principles after the "Greek" tradition. As late as the seventeenth century, the liturgical reforms of Patriarch Nikon were still pretending to restore ancient "Greek laws." There was fallacy in these rather artificial and misleading attempts at catching up with the past, but there is no doubt that this liturgical and ritual conservatism, as well as the theory of "Moscow, the Third Rome" were by-products and direct results of the Byzantine legacy in Russia.

Let us try to reflect further on the nature of this legacy and first, on the Byzantine Christian civilization itself.

### *Byzantium and Russia in the Middle Ages*

To follow the convenient categories once spelled out by G. A. Ostrogorsky, the life and culture of Byzantium was marked by three distinct but

7 "Derzhavneishii i Bogovenchanne, i blagochestiia revniteliu vysochaishii Tsariu i Samoderzhche..." (letter of Grand-Prince Vasilii Vasilievich to Emperor Constantine XI in 1451, in A. S. Pavlov, ed., *Pamiatniki drevne-russkago kanonicheskago prava*, I, No. 71 (*Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka*, VI [St Petersburg, 1880])).

8 Miklosich-Müller, *Acta* II, 188-92; the letter has been often quoted: see the translation of the relevant passages in J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), pp. 106-9.

essential components: the Roman political legacy, the Greek language and Orthodox Christianity. "Without all three the Byzantine way of life would have been inconceivable."<sup>9</sup> Were these three components transmitted to the Russians? An attempt to answer the question reveals the particular nature of Byzantine influence upon Russian medieval civilization, and allows for a better understanding of medieval Russia.

On the level of *political ideology*, the first impression given by geographic realities, economic development and political structures is a negative one: Russia was never a part of the Roman (or Byzantine) empire, and the system of princely appanages in Kievan Rus' stands in vivid contrast with the imperial tradition. The contrast becomes even more vivid if one remembers that the Southern Slavs, who also adopted the Byzantine Christian civilization, did attempt to transplant the imperial idea on their soil. Their leaders assumed the title of "Roman" emperors. This is the case of the Bulgarian empires of Simeon and Samuel in the tenth-eleventh centuries and of the Serbian empire of Stefan Dushan in the fourteenth. It is true that some later texts also mention the assumption by Vladimir of the imperial title (*Basileus*), and a case has been made in favor of the possible historicity of that information.<sup>10</sup> However, if true, the title would have been purely honorific, and would only emphasize the political scheme mentioned earlier: the Russian prince was perceived as a member of a family headed by the emperor. He was not his equal. His relation to the imperial throne of Constantinople would be in many ways similar to that of other "barbarian" rulers, particularly the heads of the various Germanic kingdoms and tribes of the West, who in the fifth to seventh centuries were also receiving court titles from Byzantium and understood their states as component parts of the one universal Roman world. The realism of Byzantine foreign policy condoned the existence of such a loose imperial "Commonwealth"—a viable alternative to a real empire. However, a unilateral assumption of the imperial title—as was the case with Charlemagne, Simeon and Samuel of Bulgaria, and Stefan Dushan—was seen in Byzantium as an intolerable usurpation.

Thus, in Russia, since the baptism of Vladimir, the Roman political

9 G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1969), p. 27.

10 D. Obolensky, "Byzance et la Russie de Kiev," in *Byzantium and the Slavs: Collected Studies*, IV (London: Variorum, 1971), pp. 27-33.

tradition, imported from Byzantium, was not so much a political system, directly determining the everyday life of society, but rather an ideology of Christian universalism, superimposed upon the local, divisive traditions of tribal or dynastic allegiance. However, the divisiveness of the local "Appanage" system was placed under the judgment of a universalist criterion, both "Christian" and Roman. Indeed, the imperial conceptions of Constantine and Justinian were based upon an alliance between the universal empire of Rome and the universal Christian Church, an imperial structure and an ecclesiastical hierarchy. In Russia, the ecclesiastical hierarchy alone was in control, and it is through the Church that Russians were initiated into the principles of universalism. The universalist criterion resounded quite loudly in the hymnology of the Church. For instance, on Christmas Eve, the providential significance of the *pax romana*, as it was expounded in the fourth century by Eusebius of Caesarea, was solemnly proclaimed in the liturgy:

When Augustus reigned alone upon the earth,  
the many kingdoms of man came to an end...  
The cities of the world passed under one single rule;  
and the nations came to believe in one sovereign Godhead.  
The peoples were enrolled by the decree of Caesar;  
and we, the faithful, were enrolled in the Name of the Godhead.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the Kievan period, the period of Mongol domination, and in the early states of Muscovite supremacy, the power and prestige of the "metropolitan of Kiev and All Russia," appointed from Byzantium and presiding over a church where the name of the emperor was commemorated over and above the names of the local princes ruling over a politically divided land (the pagan grand-prince of Lithuania, the grand-prince of Halich, the grand-prince of Moscow, etc.), was the single most powerful unifying factor in the huge country of Rus'. This power was moral, political, and also economic. It also reminded the Russians of the reality of a universal Church. This is reflected in many texts. Here is how the hagiographer Epiphanius the Wise dates the death of St Stephen of Perm (late fourteenth century):

During the reign of the Orthodox Greek Emperor Manuel, reigning in the Queen of Cities, under Patriarch Anthony, Archbishop of Constantinople, under Patri-

<sup>11</sup> In the Greek and Slavic liturgical Menaion this hymn is attributed to Emperor Leo VI (886-912). Engl. tr. in Mother Mary and K. Ware, *The Festal Menaion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), p. 254.

archs Dorotheos of Jerusalem, Mark of Alexandria, Neilos of Antioch, under the Orthodox Grand-Prince Basil Dimitrievich of all Russia...under Archbishop Cyprian, Metropolitan of all Russia...under the other pious and Christian princes [list of names, including Vitovt of Lithuania], in the sixteenth year of the rule of Tsar Tokhtamysh...<sup>12</sup>

The universalism implied in this vision is, of course, a Christian and Orthodox universalism, but it is also directly connected with and inherited from the Roman and Byzantine idea of an "inhabited earth," headed by an emperor, and endowed with a sort of divinely established permanence, standing above the local, national principalities, and even somewhat above the concrete reality of the Mongol rule over most of Russia.

But what did Russia inherit from the *Greek component* of Byzantine civilization? Indeed, one of the major characteristics of the missionary expansion of the Byzantine Church—exemplified by the model of St Cyril and Methodius—was the translation of Scripture and the liturgy into the vernacular. Thus, Kievan Rus' received Christianity with a ready translation of sacred texts into Slavic, inherited from the Moravian mission of the ninth century by the two brothers from Thessalonica. The contrast was great with the Latin West, where Latin—a "classical" language—had become the language of prayer, the language of Christian thought and the vehicle of cultural progress. The Slavs—and particularly the Russians—did not have to study either Greek or Latin. The obvious advantage was a more rapid "indigenization" of Christianity, the very goal of the "Cyrillo-Methodian" missionary approach. Also, the inevitable clericalization of society which occurred in the Latin West, where clerics who were obliged professionally to learn Latin soon acquired a practical monopoly in the intellectual and legal field, did not occur in the Slavic countries. But the availability of Scriptures and other literature in translation had another major consequence which would have a lasting effect on Russian culture: since there was not compelling need to study a "classical" language, classical civilization was not assimilated in Russia together with Christianity, as was the case in the West. Indeed, a Latin medieval scholar who knew Latin would not read only Christian scriptures, but also Cicero, Augustine, and eventually Aristotle. Instead, a Russian *knizhnik* would only have at his disposal works translated from the Greek and

<sup>12</sup> Ed. E. V. Druzhinin (Moscow, 1897); rep. in D. Cizevsky, *Zhitie sv. Stefana Permskogo* (Gravenhage, 1959), p. 85.

channeled through the Church, i.e., liturgical, hagiographic, canonical, and some historical materials.

This situation was due not only to the Byzantine missionary policy of translating texts into Slavic, but also to the perennial tension which existed within the Byzantine civilization itself in relation to Hellenic tradition. The Byzantines, who were fully conscious of the fact that their language was "Hellenic"—the language of Plato and Demosthenes—were also reading the New Testament, where the term "Hellenic" meant "pagan." The incompatibility between "Athens and Jerusalem," between Plato and the Gospel, was enshrined in Byzantine liturgical texts. Even the Virgin Mary was eulogized in the great and beautiful hymn *Akathistos* as the one "who has torn asunder the tangled webs of the Athenians." The annual proclamation of the dogmas of the Church, on the first Sunday of Lent, known as the *Synodikon* of Orthodoxy, included an anathema against those who give preference to the made and false wisdom of secular philosophers.<sup>13</sup> Of course, the great Fathers of the Church had used Hellenic philosophical ideas very widely and had proclaimed the usefulness of such ideas for expressing theological categories. But the Church had ultimately rejected Platonism as a *system*, particularly when, in the sixth century, it condemned Origenism. The Christian Hellenism of Byzantium was thus a transfigured Platonism which had abandoned some of the basic principles upon which Platonism was built: eternity of "intellectual" existence, materiality understood as fallenness, etc. Furthermore, influential powers and forces, particularly within monasticism, always continued to warn against the dangers of any "secular" Hellenism.

Under such conditions, it is understandable that very little of the secular knowledge, still available only to a narrow circle of Byzantine intellectuals, was translated into Slavic. The translators were mainly monks, who rarely translated secular texts; what the Russians received from the Greeks was not Hellenic civilization, but Christian religion. Of course, this religion was enshrined in a hymnography reflecting the Christian Hellenism of the Church Fathers. The Slavonic language used by the Church kept some of the flexible beauty of Greek poetic terminol-

<sup>13</sup> The text of the *Synodikon* can be found in all editions of the Greek liturgical *Triodion*: see the critical edition and commentary by Jean Gouillard, "Le Synodikon de l'Orthodoxie," in *Travaux et Mémoires* (Paris, 1967), p. 57.

ogy, but theological and philosophical concepts were often lost in the translation. Secular philosophical knowledge would come to Russia not from Byzantium, but from the West—primarily during the Enlightenment—which is one of the important elements in the dramatic *discontinuities* which characterize Russian history.

The third essential component of Byzantine civilization is the *Orthodox Christian faith* itself. By the time of Vladimir's baptism, Byzantine Orthodoxy was a highly developed and sophisticated tradition. It had gone through complicated theological controversies and produced a very elaborate theological literature, a splendid tradition of art and architecture. Its liturgy—which so much impressed the Russian ambassadors of 987—involved more than just a system of ceremonies and symbols. Orthodoxy was adopted and developed in Russia, even if some of the theological sophistication was lost in the translation of Byzantine texts.

As is well known, Byzantine missionary expansion among Russians had begun before the time of St Vladimir, starting in the ninth century. This early presence of Christianity is witnessed by patriarch Photius, and later and more importantly by the baptism in 945-55 of Princess Olga, later canonized. It is obvious, however, that—even after Christianity became the official state religion under St Vladimir—ancestral paganism survived for centuries. This *dvoeverie* (dual belief) was a widespread reality, particularly in Kievan Rus'. However, one has to recognize also the rapid appropriation by the Russians of some essential traits of Byzantine Orthodoxy: its overall perception of the Christian faith as involving the dwelling of God among men—in the beauty of liturgical celebration and in the ethical ideals of monastic spirituality. This can be seen from the most cursory review of translations from Greek to Slavic in the early period of Russian Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Monuments of ecclesiastical architecture, as prominent as the cathedrals dedicated to St Sophia—the Wisdom of God—in Kiev, Novgorod and Polotsk, appear within the *first* century of Russian Christianity. This is remarkable in itself, showing both the Byzantine legacy of the young church and its creative appropriation of ideas and directions coming from Byzantium. The same can be said of

<sup>14</sup> See the recent and remarkably complete review of such materials (with secondary bibliography on the topic) in G. Podskalsky, *Christentum und theologische Literatur in der Kiever Rus'* (988-1237), (München, C. H. Beck, 1982), pp. 56-72.

pictorial art: faithful to Byzantine models, the Russians soon developed a dynamic local creativity. The role of the Kievan monastery of the Caves (*Pecherskii monastyr'*) with its *Rule*, adopted from the Constantinopolitan Studios, the later development of monasticism in the Russian North, led by St Sergius of Radonezh, the tremendous popularity of hagiographical writing (both in translation and in the original), and the definite preference, within the large body of patristic literature, for ascetical and spiritual writings, are all elements which allow us to understand medieval Russian Christianity in its relation to its mother church in Byzantium.

The issue of the transmission of Byzantine Christianity to Russia has rarely been discussed in depth by historians equally familiar with both civilizations and with the sources related to them. As a result, historians come up with sweeping generalizations, emphasizing either contrasts or similarities, which make sound historical judgments very difficult.

It has been said, for instance, that "Russian" Orthodoxy had a greater sense of the ethical dimensions of Christianity, that it had discovered the experience of a "kenotic," suffering Christ, better than the more dogmatic, "Hellenized" and "orientalized" perceptions supposedly dominant in Byzantium.<sup>15</sup> Others, on the contrary, see in Russian medieval literature and ethos nothing but a pale imitation of Byzantine models and, in the later period, a prevailing uncritical adoption of Western ideas.<sup>16</sup> Thought-provoking as they may be, such generalized approaches to the Russian Middle Ages hardly invalidate the fact of the obvious *continuity* between Byzantium and Russia in understanding and confessing *the same* Orthodox tradition. The liturgical texts used in Russia were exact and literal translation from the Greek. Translated hagiographic texts served as models to Russian hagiographers. It is true that the earliest canonized Russian saints, Boris and Gleb, sons of St Vladimir, murdered by their brother Sviatopolk, were venerated as symbols of Christian humility and non-violence. But the eleventh-century Russian *Skazanie* which related their death stands faithfully in the tradition of the early Christian *Acta Martyrum*.<sup>17</sup> The same can be said of the abundant ascetic and spiritual

15 This is a dominant idea in otherwise brilliant essays by the late G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: 1946-1966).

16 This is the overall impression one gets from a cursory reading of G. Florovsky's *Puti russkogo bogoslovii* (Paris, 1937; rep. Paris, 1981).

17 For a recent study of the cult of Sts Boris and Gleb, see A. Poppe, "La naissance du culte de

literature and of the spirituality of Russian monastic saints. Reflecting local conditions, temperaments and political situations, they nevertheless always identify themselves with the age of the Church Fathers, i.e., the tradition received from the Christian East, through the mediation of the Church of Byzantium.

Particular attention is often paid—primarily by Western historians—to what is called Byzantine "caesaropapism," and its legacy in Russia. The term refers to the role of Eastern Christian emperors as manifesting the Kingship of Christ, presiding over councils, interfering in the solution of both doctrinal and disciplinary issues, and in general supervising and directing many aspects of religious life in Byzantium. This role of the emperor was, indeed, considered as normal in Russia also. We have seen earlier that, even in the late Byzantine period, the name of the reigning Byzantine sovereign was mentioned in Russian churches. Furthermore, texts indicate that he formally assumed an active role in Russian ecclesiastical affairs. In 1347, John Cantacuzenos issued a decision unifying the metropolitanate of Kiev;<sup>18</sup> and the patriarchal decrees appointing new metropolitans of Russia, were normally given "with the consent and confirmation" of the emperor.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the diplomatic role played by the metropolitan of Russia on behalf of the Byzantine empire in Eastern Europe—including the relationships (generally friendly) between Constantinople and the Mongol empire, which ruled Russia after 1237—made such imperial interventions inevitable.<sup>20</sup> However, in Byzantium the power of the emperor in ecclesiastical affairs was never conceived as unconditional. An emperor unfaithful to Orthodoxy was viewed as an usurper or "tyrant." It is in this sense that the term "caesaropapism," suggesting an absolute doctrinal and disciplinary authority of "Caesar" similar to that of Roman popes, is hardly applicable to the Byzantine theory of the sacredness of the emperor—in his role of leader of the Christian *oikoumene*—but also about the many Orthodox victims of imperially-sponsored violence or heresy: St John Chrysostom, St Maximus the Confessor, St Theodore of Studios.

Boris and Gleb," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, XXIV, 1 (Poitiers, 1981), p. 29-53.

18 See above, note 6.

19 See the appointment of Metropolitans Alexis (in 1354) and Pimen (in 1380) in Miklosich-Müller, *Acta*, I, 338 and II, 17 respectively.

20 See my discussion of this and several connected issues in *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia*, pp. 73-95.



The numerous confessors of the faith who were victimized by the iconoclastic emperors were particularly remembered in liturgical hymns and hagiography. Their confession was publicly and repeatedly praised in texts, which Russian clergy and laity knew by heart, and which cursed the memory of heretical emperors (for instance, the frequently repeated *troparion* in honor of victims of iconoclasm, who are glorified because they “destroyed Copronymos”—emperor Constantine V, [741-775]—“by the sword of faith.”

In Russia, the general medieval concept of sacred kingship was applied to Russian princes<sup>21</sup> who, as mentioned earlier, were seen as junior members of the imperial “family.” But among them, there were also “tyrants,” including the best known among them—Sviatopolk, murderer of Boris and Gleb.

In practice, from the time of St Vladimir’s baptism and until the assumption of ecclesiastical independence by the metropolitanate of Moscow (1448), the metropolitan of all Russia, by virtue of his appointment from Constantinople, enjoyed great independence from local politics and local rulers. This independence also gave to his actions and decisions a decisive political significance. The policies of such metropolitans as Cyril (1242-81), Peter (1308-26), Theognostos (1328-52), Alexis (1354-78) and Cyprian (1375-1406) were decisive in many facets of the relationships between the southwestern and northeastern principalities of Rus’, and in the final move of the metropolitanate from Kiev to Moscow. After 1448, however, the election of Muscovite metropolitans by the local episcopal synod placed them under the direct control of the grand-princes of Moscow, and later of the tsar. This new situation was not the result of “Byzantine” influence, but of a new political and cultural situation, characteristic specifically of Moscow and the fast-growing Russian state.

### *The Byzantine Legacy in Modern Russia*

The emergence of the Muscovite Russian *tsardom* in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries coincided chronologically with the end of the Middle Ages. And since the basic principles, the cultural harmony, the overall

<sup>21</sup> See A. Poppe, “Le prince et l’Eglise en Russie de Kiev depuis la fin du X<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu’au début de XII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 20 (1963), pp. 95-119; see also by the same author, *Panstwo i Kościół na Rusi w XI wieku* (Warszawa, 1968).

perception of reality which characterized Byzantium, were essentially medieval phenomena, there was no way in which they could have continued, without fundamental changes, in Muscovite Russia following the fall of Constantinople in 1453.

The often-mentioned theory of “Moscow, the Third Rome” did indeed emerge in the fifteenth century. Its literary or ideological manifestations were interesting witnesses to the mentality of the times, but they remained quite limited in their practical influence. A famous text, known as the *Legend of the White Cowl*—a variation of the Western *Donation of Constantine*—according to which a papal white cowl, donated to Pope Sylvester by Emperor Constantine, and eventually ending up in Novgorod (passing through Byzantium)—was an ideological attempt to justify the superiority of the priesthood over temporal power. It characterized the Latin-oriented interests which dominated the court of Genadius, archbishop of Novgorod (1484-1504). The ideas contained in the well-known letters of the monk Filofei of Pskov to grand-prince Vasili III were never formally endorsed by the latter, but they did contain the idea of a *translatio imperii* to Moscow, the “Third Rome.” Their interpretation of the succession of kingdoms, described in the book of Daniel, was in fact too apocalyptic to be accepted as practical political guidelines. Even the marriage of Ivan III with Zoe, the niece of the last Byzantine emperor of the Palaeologan dynasty, did not entail a formal claim to imperial succession, but rather, to quote Karamzin, “did tear apart the curtain separating Russia from Europe.” Actually, it “brought about a *rapprochement* between Muscovy and contemporary Italy,”<sup>22</sup> where the princess had received her upbringing, and was contemporary with the rebuilding of the Moscow Kremlin—*more italico*—by Italian architects.

It is impossible to examine here further and in full the fate of the Byzantine legacy in modern Russia. For the sake of discussion, however, it might be useful to remember the three categories which, as mentioned earlier, are major constituents of Byzantine civilization: the Roman political tradition, the Greek language (i.e., the tradition of classical antiquity) and the Orthodox Christian faith. What happened to these categories in post-medieval Russia?

Although Ivan III had already begun to use the title of “tsar”—the  
<sup>22</sup> G. Florovsky, *Puti russkago bogoslovstva* (Paris, 1981), p. 12.

Slavic equivalent of "Caesar," or emperor—it is only his grandson, Ivan IV, who was formally anointed and proclaimed "God-crowned Tsar" in 1547, according to a modified Byzantine ceremonial. However, very characteristically, the theory of a *translatio imperii* from Constantinople to Moscow seldom appears in contemporary Russian sources. It is true that Metropolitan Zosima (1490-1494) had described Ivan III as "the new Emperor Constantine of the new city of Constantine—Moscow,"<sup>23</sup> but the idea was not picked up explicitly at the time of the coronation of Ivan IV. Interestingly enough, the idea appears not in a Russian document, but in a letter of the patriarch of Constantinople, Joasaph, sent in 1561, which confirmed the assumption of the title by Ivan IV and, curiously, justified it by the fact that he was, *mutatis mutandis*, a relative of Byzantine Emperor Basil II through the latter's sister Anna, wife of St Vladimir.<sup>24</sup> Otherwise, "the political implications of the doctrine of Moscow the Third Rome do not seem to have been taken very seriously by the tsars of that time."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, one of the essential characteristics of the authentic "imperial" title was its universality. This *was* the main implication of the "Roman" political tradition, preserved in Byzantium. In obvious contrast, the Muscovite tsar assumed the title of "tsar of all Russia." His monarchy was over a *nation-state*. A reader of Machiavelli, Ivan IV used the theocratic argument to solidify his power, and among his argument was the Byzantine imperial idea. But this imperial ideology was covering a social and cultural reality quite different from Byzantium: that of nationally-inspired policies similar to those prevailing in post-Renaissance Europe.

What about the legacy of Antiquity? As was shown earlier, neither the Greek language, nor the philosophy of the ancient Greeks was exported by the Byzantine church to Russia. As a result, among the major European nations, the Russians left the Middle Ages and entered the modern age without passing through the two stages crucial to the history of Western Europe: the Renaissance and the Reformation. In this fact, many historians of Russia might see an advantage; other might bemoan it. Be that as it

23 G. M. Diakonov, *Vlast' moskovskikh gosudarei* (St Petersburg, 1889), pp. 64-66.

24 M. A. Obolensky, *Sobornaia gramota dukhovenstva vostochnoi tserkvi, utvershdaiushchaia san tsaria* (Moscow, 1850); critical ed. by W. Regel, *Analecta byzantino russica orthodoxon* (St Petersburg, 1891-98), pp. 75-79; rep. by A.N. Tachiaos, *Peghes ekklesiastikes historias orthodoxon slavon* (Thessaloniki, 1984), I, 161.

25 D. Obolensky, "Russia's Byzantine Heritage," in *The Structure of Russian History*, M. Cherniavsky, ed. (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 11.

may, it is a fact that even in the seventeenth century Russian church and society were unable to cope by themselves with the problem of a new translation of liturgical text, hence the tragedy of the "Old Believers" schism. Knowledge of Greek and Latin was brought to Muscovy by Ukrainian graduates of the Kievan Academy, and later, after Peter the Great, by a drastic introduction of a school system directly borrowed from Western Europe.

There remains finally the last of the three components of Byzantinism: the Christian faith and the Orthodox Church. As we have seen earlier, its development in Russia, begun with St Vladimir's baptism, was originally fairly organic. The Byzantine legacy was rapidly assumed and bore fruit in the fields of spirituality, art, architecture and literature. But this organic development entered a period of tension in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the establishment of the imperial nation-state in Muscovy and with the massive importation of Western secularized civilization in the seventeenth and eighteenth.

Within the Muscovite nation-state, the Church became a national church. Its heads, the metropolitans (later patriarchs) of Moscow, were now elected locally and became closely dependent upon the tsar. Gone were the days when the head of the Russian Church appointed by the distant patriarch of Constantinople could freely arbitrate local political conflicts. And the tsar himself was not anymore a medieval sovereign, personally committed to the faith and *de facto* answerable to church tradition and discipline, as the Byzantine emperors still were. state interests—or personal whims—were now his highest priority. Here is one case of glaring contrast: when Byzantine Emperor Leo VI married a fourth time in 905, he had to face both the opposition of the Church in the person of the patriarch and an uproar of public opinion, leading to schism. He eliminated (rather gently) the reluctant prelate, but the conflict ended only with a condemnation of his illegitimate union. In Muscovy, meanwhile, Ivan IV married seven times, without noticeable opposition.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, the tsar—like many Renaissance princes of

26 It is worth noting, however, that Ivan IV was considered as being excommunicated by the church. According to the Jesuit Possevino, "the Prince has a personal confessor who goes everywhere with him when he leaves Moscow. The Prince confesses his sins to him every year, but he can no longer receive the eucharist because, in accordance with their laws, it is forbidden to anyone who has had more than three wives to have communion with the Body of Christ our

the contemporary West—was in a position to use deliberate force to forestall criticism by the church. One metropolitan, St Philip, was deposed and killed in 1568 for his opposition to the tsar's policies. In general, the church in Muscovy was subordinated to the state in a much tighter way than was the case in Byzantium. An attempt was made by patriarch Nikon (1652-58) to assert ecclesiastical control over the state, following basically the Western model. It soon ended in failure, and was followed by the reforms of Peter the Great, which transformed the church into a department of state, according to the pattern prevailing in Lutheran countries of the eighteenth century.

Thus, in Russia the Orthodox Church faced successive assaults of active, state-sponsored secularization. It always kept the memory of the Byzantine or "Greek" sources of its Christian tradition, and it was keen on maintaining contacts with the Turkish-dominated ancient centers of Orthodoxy, particularly Constantinople. But in practice, since the fifteenth century, it had become a national church, with little help or support from abroad to settle its problems.

Many contemporary historians of Russia tend to discount the role of the church in Russian history, or interpret it only negatively. Their judgment is based primarily on the Western historical experience, according to which the church would exercise its influence on society through its institutions, which were legally defined, legally independent, and therefore able to compete with or control secular power. One must conclude that, judged by that criterion, the Russian Church of the modern period did rather poorly, for the historical reasons mentioned above.

However, one of the most peculiar—but quite important—legacies of Eastern Christianity, which Byzantium passed on to Russians, was the paradox of a simultaneous existence in the Church of both *sacramental* and *spiritual* leadership and experience. The liturgy, the sacraments, and also the spiritual tradition of monasticism, rather than political influence, were seen as the authentic *content* of the Christian faith.<sup>27</sup> The reality which they offered was somewhat independent from the official stand of

Lord" (*The Moscovia*, tr. by M. F. Graham, UCIS series in Russian and East European Studies, 1 [1977], p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> On this topic, see my article "St Basil, the Church and Charismatic Leadership," in J. Meyendorff, *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982), pp. 197-215.

patriarchs of metropolitans, who often depended upon the state. Actually, the Greeks themselves were experiencing a similar situation within an Ottoman empire which kept deposing patriarchs, so that the survival of the church hardly depended upon their authority.

In Russia, already in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the monastic party of the so-called "Non-Possessors," disciples of St Nil Sorsky, had lost a battle of influence at the court of the grand-prince and with the higher echelons of the church. Nevertheless, it is *their* monastic spirituality, rooted in Byzantine contemplative hesychasm and the tradition of the "Jesus Prayer," which survived as the most authentic and influential spiritual reality within the Russian Church. In the nineteenth century, personalities such as St Seraphim of Sarov and the *startsy* ("elders") of Optino will be the most respected voices of Orthodox Christianity amidst an increasingly secularized society.

Furthermore, Western ideas and methods, which began to penetrate Russia since the sixteenth century—the Latin theological patterns taught at Kiev, the drastically westernized educational policies introduced during the Petrine reforms—were actually integrated within the official Church into an updated and highly advanced system of theological education. In addition, the missionary expansion, including the use of the old Cyrillo-Methodian method of translating scripture and liturgy into dozens of new languages, was continuing both within and beyond the borders of the Russian empire. The subsistence even today of entirely indigenized missions in Japan and Alaska bears witness to this.

Finally, one cannot do justice to the overall result of the baptism of St Vladimir without considering the impact of Christianity upon society as such. As an institution, the church had been socially marginalized by the reforms of Peter I, with the clergy becoming a caste, culturally cut off from the nobility and the intelligentsia. But the Christian faith remained at the very center of Russian cultural consciousness. What is extraordinary and truly remarkable is that in the nineteenth century Russia produced a literature which, if considered as a whole, is undoubtedly the most "Christian" among European literatures of the period. Indeed, is it not true that the novels of Dostoevsky raise theological problems better than many theological manuals? That Pushkin, Gogol and Chekhov—whatever their personal spiritual odyssey—expressed better than many manu-

als of ethics that which is *authentic and true* in human behavior, and particularly human religiosity, and that which is hollow and false? And the great Leo Tolstoy—theologically and philosophically perhaps more naive than the others—remained something of a living conscience of Western civilization.

That literature has its ultimate roots in the baptism of St Vladimir in 987-88. Even today its popularity and its influence, both in Russia and abroad, shows that the seeds planted a millennium ago produced results in most unexpected ways and in unexpected places. It can be said, therefore, that the event whose millennium we commemorate is not only an important historical watershed in the history of medieval Eastern Europe: it is an important factor in the life of human society as a whole.

## 8

## Was There Ever A "Third Rome"? Remarks on the Byzantine Legacy in Russia<sup>1</sup>

Of the several East European countries which adopted Orthodox Christianity from Byzantium and, therefore, accepted as the foundation of their literary and spiritual culture the entire corpus of the Byzantine liturgy, translated into Slavic, as well as the idea of a universal empire, responsible for the unity of the Christian world, Russia alone remained untouched by the Turkish conquest. Historically, therefore, the problematic of "Byzantium after Byzantium" is different, when it applies to Russia, and to the Balkan states.<sup>2</sup> The conversions of the princess Olga (957) and, later, of her grandson, Vladimir (988-9), established the "land of the Rus"—extending from the Carpathian mountains to the Volga and from Novgorod to the steppes, inhabited by Khazars and Pechenegs—as part of the "Byzantine Commonwealth," without ever making it a part of the empire. Russian princes recognized the universal, moral supremacy of the Eastern Roman emperor, but not his political domination. The Church of Russia, however, was administratively dependent upon Byzantium for centuries (988-1448). The metropolitan "of Kiev and all Russia" (κλέβου καὶ πάσης Ῥωσίας) was generally a Greek, always appointed from Constantinople. Only in the later period, i.e., the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries,<sup>3</sup> was there a regular alternation of Greeks and Russians as heads of the church, but the Russian candidates also made the voyage to Constantinople in order to obtain consecration to the office of metropolitan. The prestige and influence of the church was great, because it represented the only administrative structure covering the entire country. Indeed, Kievan Russia was divided between warring principalities. Later,

<sup>1</sup> First published in J. J. Yannias, *The Byzantine Tradition After the Fall of Constantinople* (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville and London, 1991), pp. 45-60.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the pertinent remarks of A. E. Tachiaos, "Byzantium after Byzantium," in J. Meyendorff, *et al.*, *The Legacy of St. Vladimir* (SVS Press, Crestwood NY, 1989), pp.

<sup>3</sup> On this period, see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

following the disastrous Mongol conquest (1237-40), the northeastern principalities became a part of the Mongol empire, centered in Peking. Whereas the parts which will be later known as the Ukraine and Byelorussia fell under Lithuanian and Polish domination.

### *The Council of Florence and the Fall of Byzantium: Aftermath in Russia.*

The weak Byzantine empire of the Palaeologan emperors (1261-1453) was not able, by itself, to determine events in Russia, but it did exercise indirect influence through its diplomatic ties with the Mongol Khans (enemies of the Turks), and through its alliance with the Genoese, who were controlling commerce with the Far East through the Black Sea. This Mongol-Genoese-Byzantine "axis" explains, at least partly, the diplomatic favors extended by Byzantium, through the church, to the great principality of Moscow, which began its political ascension as an ally of the Mongols. But religious factors also played a role: the Western principalities, under Polish and Lithuanian domination, were more susceptible to fall under the spell of Latin Christendom. Indeed, in 1386, Poland and Lithuania—with their numerous Orthodox population—were united under a Roman Catholic king. Even before that date, the ecumenical patriarchate had felt that Orthodoxy was more secure under the Mongols and supported the transfer of the metropolitan's see from Kiev to Moscow.

Paradoxically, as the empire was shrinking more and more, the ties between the ecumenical patriarchate and the Russian metropolitanate were strengthened. This was due to the activity of strong metropolitans such as Cyprian (1375-1406)—a Bulgarian, and a close friend and disciple of the hesychast patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos—and Photius (1408-31), a Greek from Monemvasia, whose famous embroidered *sakkos*, an episcopal dalmatic, featuring prominently the images of the Byzantine emperor John VIII and grand prince Basil I of Moscow, with their wives,<sup>4</sup> represents a clear political and religious program which he was sent to fulfill as metropolitan: to assure the continuous membership of Russia in the Byzantine Commonwealth. This mission was spelled out quite explicitly also in the often-quoted

<sup>4</sup> Cf. reproductions in A. V. Bank, *Vizantiiskoe iskusstvo v sobraniakh sovetskogo soiuza* (Leningrad-Moscow, 1965), p. 287 (tr. by I. Sorokina, Leningrad, 1977, p. 329, plates 300-4).

letter of patriarch Anthony to Basil I, written in 1393, a few years before the appointment of Photius: the Byzantine emperor is emperor "of the Romans, that is of all Christians...For Christians, it is not possible to have a church, and not have an emperor..." But the patriarch also added: "Christians reject only the heretical emperors, who were raging against the Church and introducing doctrines which were corrupt and foreign to the teachings of the apostles and the fathers..."<sup>5</sup>

When metropolitan Photius died (1431), the Byzantine authorities were deeply involved in preparing a union council, intended to secure direct Western help against advancing Turks. In order to secure Russian support and commitment, a well-trained diplomat, Isidore, was appointed as metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, while the grand-prince's candidate, Bishop Jonas of Riazan—who had already come to Constantinople to receive the appointment—was rather humiliatingly rejected (1437-8). But Russian loyalty to Byzantium was not shaken: Isidore received money and a large retinue from grand-prince Basil II, the "Blind," and traveled to Italy for the council, representing the metropolitanate of Russia.

In reading some modern historians of the period, one gets the impression that the Muscovite grand-prince was eagerly waiting for the opportunity to supplant Byzantium and to assume the positions of emperor of a "Third Rome." The facts reported above speak strongly against that view. The grand-principality was still under Mongol rule. It had just gone through a long and bloody dynastic struggle, during which Basil II was blinded by a competitor before recovering his throne. The national—and somewhat "messianic"—self-affirmation of the Russians came later. It occurred as a reaction to Florence and to the subsequent fall of Constantinople—a reaction which came about gradually and never took the form of an official *translatio imperii* from Constantinople to Moscow.

Isidore returned to Moscow from Florence in 1441, as a cardinal of the Roman church, after traveling through Italy, Hungary and Poland. The Russians had been informed, both by their own delegates to Florence and by connections in Constantinople, of the resistance of Mark of Ephesus to

<sup>5</sup> Miklosich-Müller, *Acta patriarchatus Constantinopolitani* (Vienna, 1862), II, 188-92; relevant passages are translated in J. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391-1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* (New Brunswick NJ, 1962), pp. 106-9.



the conciliar decrees and of the subsequent repentance of a majority of Greek signatories. The grand-prince's decision to reject Isidore was not an anti-Byzantine revolt: it was rather based on the expectation of an Orthodox restoration in Byzantium. In a highly respectful letter to the newly elected patriarch Metrophanes—who supported Florence in principle, but was not in a position to proclaim officially a union of the churches—the grand-prince requests permission to elect a metropolitan locally: “We beg your most holy lordship to examine your holy and divine Greek canons...and authorize the appointment of a metropolitan to be effected in our own country.”<sup>6</sup> No reply came and the Russians waited for seven more years before performing in 1448 the independent consecration of the formerly rejected candidate, Jonas of Riazan', as metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia. The appointment was recognized as legitimate not only in Muscovy, but also in the dioceses located in the Polish-Lithuanian domain, through a formal investiture of Jonas by Polish king Casimir IV. In another letter, addressed in 1451 to the new Byzantine emperor Constantine (there was no patriarch that year in Constantinople, since the Uniat incumbent, Gregory Mammias, had left for Rome), the grand-prince promises that, once there is an Orthodox patriarch, “it will be our duty to write to him...and ask his blessing in all things.”<sup>7</sup>

The actual events in Constantinople are well-known: the Union was formally proclaimed at St Sophia in December 1452, and the city fell in May 1453.

Rejection of Florence, but also politeness and reserve towards the desperate and wavering authorities in Constantinople had been, therefore, the official attitude of the Russians in 1439-1453. Unofficial reactions, however, often took a different bent. They came, first, from the Russian clerics who had accompanied Isidore to Italy and had followed his leadership in recognizing the union. The Russian bishop Avraamy of Suzdal had indeed signed the decree. The Greeks, who had also signed, but eventually recanted, blamed psychological and material pressures exercised upon

6 A. S. Pavlov, ed., *Russkaia Istoricheskaia Biblioteka* VI (St. Petersburg, 1880) [later quoted as RIB], cols. 525-36.

7 RIB, cols. 583-6. Doubts as to the authenticity of the grand-prince's letters to the patriarch and the emperor were expressed recently by Ya. S. Lur'e (see above, chapter 6, note 42). Nevertheless, the texts do reflect the wait-and-see attitude of the Muscovites, which preceded the appointment of Jonas in 1448.

them by the Latins. The Russians put the blame on the deviousness of Isidore and the “betrayal” of the Greeks. Patriarch Anthony, in 1393, had called the Russians to be loyal to Orthodox Byzantium but recognized the need to “reject heretical emperors.”<sup>8</sup> The argument was now seen as fully applicable to the situation after 1439: “Oh great sovereign emperor,” wrote one polemicist, addressing John VIII Palaeologus, signatory of the Union of Florence, “why did you go to them?...You have exchanged light for darkness; instead of the divine law, you have received the Latin faith;...Formerly you were the agent of piety, now you are the sower of evil seeds...”<sup>9</sup> Under the circumstances, it was the grand-prince of Moscow who had to be seen as a “new Constantine,” savior of Orthodoxy.<sup>10</sup> But the same argument was also used to exalt not only Moscow, but other Russian centers, for instance the prince Boris of Tver, who had also sent a representative to the council and now, after rejecting the Latin faith, was said by one polemicist to deserve an imperial diadem.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, in Novgorod, under archbishop Gennadius (1484-1509), there appeared a curious Russian variation on the *Donation of Constantine*: the *Legend of the White Cowl*. According to the *Legend*, a white cowl (*klobuk*; Gr. ἐπικαλίδιμαυκον) was donated by Constantine the Great to pope Sylvester following his baptism; the last Orthodox pope, foreseeing Rome's fall into heresy, sent the cowl for safe-keeping to patriarch Philotheos of Constantinople, who eventually (also foreseeing the betrayal of Florence), sent the precious relic to the archbishop of Novgorod.<sup>12</sup> Thus, not only Moscow, but also Tver and Novgorod were somehow claiming to be the heirs of “Rome,” the center of the true Christian faith...

8 See above, note 5.

9 *Slovo izbrano*, in A. N. Popov, *Istoriko-literaturnii obzor drevnerusskikh polemicheskikh sochinenii protiv Latinian* (Moscow, 1875), pp. 372-3.

10 The argument appears in letters of metropolitan Jonas in 1451 (RIB VI, col. 559-60) and other documents; see a review of the texts in M. Cherniavsky, “The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow,” *Church History* 24 (1955), 1, pp. 347-59.

11 Monk Thomas, *Praise of the pious Grand Prince Boris of Tver*, ed. N. Likhachev, in *Pamiatniki drevnei pis'mennosti*, 168 (Moscow, 1908), pp. 1-15.

12 On the *Legend*, see N. N. Rozov, “Povest' o Novgorodskom belom klobuke” in *Trudy otdela drevne-russkoi literatury*, 9 (Leningrad, 1953), pp. 178-219; extracts translated in S. A. Zenkovsky, *Medieval Russian Epics, Chronicles and Tales*. Revised and enlarged edition, E. P. Dutton Paperback (New York, 1974), pp. 326-32. Following the annexation of Novgorod by Muscovy, the white cowl became distinctive of the metropolitans (later patriarchs) of Moscow. Peter the great, following his suppression of the patriarchate, bestowed the right to wear a white cowl to all the metropolitans of the Russian Church—quite a devaluation of an initially papal distinction!

But of course, the destiny of becoming an imperial capital belonged to Moscow. It is to its grand-prince that the monk Filofei of Pskov (ca. 1510-1540) addressed his famous letter: "All Christian realms," he wrote, "will come to an end and will unite into the one single realm of our sovereign, that is, into the Russian realm, according to the prophetic books. Both Romes fell, the third endures, and a fourth there will not be."<sup>13</sup> But, as Georges Florovsky and others have shown, the theory of Moscow the "Third Rome" was formulated in an apocalyptic context: for Filofei, Moscow was not only the "third," but, more importantly, the "last" Rome, and he was calling the grand-prince to repentance and Christian virtues, motivating his appeals by the *imminence of the second coming*. Politically, the appeal had little practical application. The Muscovite sovereigns were in process of building up a national empire, largely inspired by Western Renaissance models and ideas, and they had little use for apocalypics. The theory of the "Third Rome," or that of a *translatio imperii* from Constantinople to Moscow, was never accepted as official state theory.

In 1472, Ivan III married the niece of the last emperor of Constantinople, who lived in Italy and had received a Western education. Although the marriage undoubtedly enhanced his prestige, it did not imply the assumption of the imperial title,<sup>14</sup> and the practical effect of the marriage consisted in substantially increasing Italian influence in Muscovy: the Kremlin was then rebuilt *more italico* by Italian architects. In 1547, Ivan III's grandson, Ivan IV, was crowned *tsar* (the Slavic equivalent of "emperor"), according to a modified Byzantine ceremonial but he did not assume the title of "emperor of the Romans," as a *translatio imperii* and the theory of a "Third Rome" would require, but that of "tsar of all the Rus." Furthermore, he requested the formal recognition of his title from the patriarch of Constantinople, sending lavish gifts to the ecumenical throne. The reply came in the form of two letters of patriarch Joasaph

<sup>13</sup> Text in V. Malinin, *Starets Eleazarova Monastyria Filofei i ego poslaniia* (Kiev, 1901), app. p. 45. Among the historical studies concerned with the theory of Filofei, the best is probably that of H. Schaefer, *Moskau das dritte Rom. Studien zur Geschichte der politischen Theorien in der slawischen Welt* (Darmstadt, 1957), pp. 82-117.

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, a *translatio imperii* was suggested to Ivan not by Russians, but by the Venetian Senate: *Quando stirps masculina deesset imperatoria ad Vestram Illustrissimam Dominationem jure vestri faustissimi conjugii pertineret* (quoted in A. Ia. Shpakov, *Gosudarstvo i tserkov' v ikh vzaimnykh otnosheniakh v Moskovskom gosudarstve I* (Kiev, 1904), pp. 43-8.

(1555-65). In the first, the patriarch expressed reservations: only the Roman pope and the patriarch of Constantinople, he wrote, have the right to crown emperors legitimately, so that the tsar should be crowned anew by the patriarch's delegate, the metropolitan of Evripas, carrier of the letter. The second document had the form of a synodal act, sanctioning the crowning once it was performed by the above-mentioned metropolitan,<sup>15</sup> and proposing an original scheme proving Ivan's legitimacy: he was a descendent of princess Anna, wife of St Vladimir and sister of Byzantine emperor Basil II...

No second crowning of Ivan ever took place, but the episode illustrates the continuous respect of the Muscovite authorities for the traditional ties between Russia and the mother-church of Constantinople, in spite of the painful break of 1448-1453. The same loyalty will be expressed in the procedures connected with the establishment of the patriarchate of Moscow in 1589.

Being in desperate need of material support, ecumenical patriarch Jeremiah II traveled to Moscow in 1588. This was an unforeseen opportunity for the Russian authorities to consider the possibility of proclaiming the establishment of a "Third Rome." Indeed, they offered Jeremiah to remain in Russia permanently, with his see in the ancient city of Vladimir, which would then become the center of the Orthodox world. Jeremiah's refusal of this offer led to an alternative: the establishment of a new patriarchate in Moscow. The act was performed by Jeremiah and later confirmed by synods which included the other patriarchs, particularly the intelligent and influential Meletios Pegas of Alexandria, in 1590 and 1593.<sup>16</sup> The meaning of these texts clearly implies the restoration of a "pentarchy" of patriarchs, which had been reduced to a "tetrarchy" by the defection of the bishop of Rome. The new patriarchate of Moscow was not seen to be an equivalent of the distant patriarchate of Georgia, or the patriarchates of Pec or Ohrid, or the archdiocese of Cyprus (all these

<sup>15</sup> Text recently reprinted with commentary by A. E. Tachiaos, Πηγές ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας τῶν ὀρθοδόξων ἐλάβων (Thessaloniki, 1984), pp. 161-4. It has been shown by W. Regel (*Analecta byzantino-russica* [St Petersburg, 1891-8], pp. LI-XCVIII) that the signatures of the metropolitans under the *Act* are forgeries. The document is therefore a personal composition of patriarch Joasaph, lacking synodal approval. Eventually, Joasaph was deposed for overstepping his prerogatives.

<sup>16</sup> Texts recently reprinted in Tachiaos, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-220, together with the ideologically important letters of Meletios Pegas to the new patriarch Job of Moscow and to the tsar.

churches were still, at least nominally, in existence, but were neither consulted nor mentioned in the acts): together with Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, it was to become one of the *five* sees recognized in the legislation of Justinian as the “five senses” of world Orthodoxy. Patriarch Job, with the title of “patriarch of Moscow, and all Russia, and of the Northern parts” (τῶν ὑπερβορείων μερῶν), was to be the “fifth patriarch,” “counted” with the other four and sharing their dignity. He was to recognize “the apostolic throne of Constantinople as its head and its primate, as the other patriarchs do.” It was also proclaimed that Constantinople and the other patriarchates had their positions and rights defined by councils “for no other reason than their place within the imperial system.”<sup>17</sup> The motivation of the rights of Moscow resided, therefore, in the existence of the Russian “empire,” so that the name of the “most pious *basileus* of Moscow and *autokrator* of all Russia and the Northern parts” was now to be included at the required moments of imperial commemorations in liturgical books everywhere.<sup>18</sup>

There is no doubt therefore that the establishment of the patriarchate of Moscow was, in itself, a most solemn reaffirmation of Byzantine traditions. The Byzantine “spirit” remained even in the fact that the new patriarchate was granted the fifth, and not the first, place among the patriarchs: was not the same sense of established tradition and custom preserved as Constantinople, the “New Rome,” refrained (until the schism) from claiming the first place above the “old imperial Rome”? Similarly, the “Third Rome” did not overtake the “second.”

However, there was also an aura of unreality around the events of 1589, not because Russians, or Greeks, did not *want* to preserve the Byzantine tradition in Russia, but because, at the very end of the sixteenth century, so many historical and cultural developments occurred that the

<sup>17</sup> Οὐδὲ...δὲ ἄλλον τινὰ λόγον..., εἰ μὴ πρὸς τὰ τῶν βασιλείων ἀξιιώματα, *Tomos of 1593*, ed. cit., p. 218; for the preceding quotations see pp. 210-211.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219. There is no special study in English on the events and conditions of the establishment of the Russian patriarchate. The most authoritative Russian study is by A. I. Shpakov, *Gosudarstvo i tserkov' v ikh vzaimnykh otnosheniakh v Moskovskom gosudarstve. Tsarstvovanie Fedora Ivanovicha. Uchrezhdenie patriarshevtva v Rossii* (Odessa, 1912); cf. also an account in A. V. Kartashev, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkvi*, (YMCA Press, Paris, 1959). The original versified description of the events by the Greek Archbishop of Ellasson, Arsenios, who accompanied patriarch Jeremiah on his trip to Russia, has been reprinted by Tachiaos, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-209.

political and legal aspects of that tradition were largely bypassed because of existing political realities.

I mentioned earlier that, already in the fifteenth century, the grand-principality of Moscow had begun building a national empire. Tsar Ivan IV the “Terrible” (1533-1584)—his popular name *groznyi*, is actually better translated as “awesome”—was an avid reader of Machiavelli. The focus of his cultural and political interests was Europe, not Byzantium. In the seventeenth century, “Europe” intervened in the very fabric of Muscovite national consciousness in the form of Polish and Swedish invasions during the so-called “Time of Troubles” (1598-1613), and also through greatly increased cultural and ideological influence coming from the West. All this provoked a real crisis of Byzantinism in Russia, which occurred in the seventeenth century, but was already in the making earlier.

### A Crisis of “Byzantinism”

The tragedy of the council of Florence and the fall of Byzantium were interpreted by some Russian polemicists as an ultimate betrayal, followed by divine punishment. But at the same time, Russian contacts with and support for the Orthodox faithful under Turkish domination, travels to holy places by Russian pilgrims, visits to Middle Eastern monasteries—particularly Sinai, Mar-Saba in Palestine, and Mt Athos—served as strong assurances that Orthodoxy and Russia’s Byzantine roots were still alive among Greeks, Arabs and Balkan Slavs. The assumption by the metropolitanate of Russia of a *de facto* ecclesiastical independence in 1448 did not imply any break of communion with the Eastern patriarchates, restored in Constantinople after 1453.

Furthermore, the Russians were always aware of the fact that Orthodoxy had come to them “from the Greeks,” and they therefore almost automatically looked for Greek sources of the true faith. The most conservative among them feared Western threats against the purity of the tradition, received through St Vladimir from Byzantium.

It is impossible for me to present here a complete history of intellectual, spiritual and personal contacts between Greeks and Russians in the late medieval and early modern periods.<sup>19</sup> A few remarks about the great

<sup>19</sup> There are fundamental pre-revolutionary Russian studies on the subject; cf. particularly V.

figure of Maximus "the Greek" should suffice to illustrate both the importance and the ambiguity of the cultural and religious relations between Russians and Greeks in the sixteenth century, and explain in advance the tragedy of the seventeenth.

Ecclesiastically independent and self-conscious in its role as the stronghold of Orthodoxy, Muscovite society was intellectually and spiritually nourished by what Russian writers referred to as the "Books" (*knigi*)—essentially the great body of liturgical, hagiographic, canonical and theological writings translated from the Greek over the years. There was valuable local writing as well—especially *Lives* of saints and sermons—but these were closely connected in style and content to Byzantine models. This Byzantine and South-Slavic impact had been particularly strong during the rise of monastic, hesychast movements in Greek and Slavic lands in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. And yet, by 1516, it was discovered that no one in Russia knew Greek and therefore no one possessed the ability to make more translations of useful patristic texts, or to correct accumulated errors in existing Slavonic manuscripts. The Russians were rapidly entering a new and "modern" era of their history, but although they were also fully committed to the preservation of the Byzantine religious and cultural legacy, they lacked the means to use it meaningfully and critically. In that year, 1516, therefore, an embassy from grand-prince Basil III traveled to Mt Athos and Constantinople, requesting that a Greek scholar be sent to Moscow to help with translations and corrections. But there was no "Cyril" or "Methodius" among the Greeks either: the man who went to Muscovy was the monk Maximus, from the Athonite monastery of Vatopedi, and he knew no Slavic.

This last limitation—however crucial in view of his specific new mission—did not prevent Maximus from being one of the most extraordinary and talented men of his age.<sup>20</sup> Born in Arta around 1470, as

Ikonnikov. *O kul'turnom znachenii Vizantii v russkoi istorii* (Kiev, 1869); A. N. Muraviev, *Snosheniia Rossii s vostokom po delam tserkovnym* (St Petersburg, 1858) and N. F. Kapterev, *Kharakter otnoshenii Rossii k pravoslavnomu Vostoku v XVI & VII stoletiiakh* (Sergiev Posad, 1914). The first part of G. Florovsky's *Ways of Russian Theology* (Russian or., Paris, 1937; Eng. tr. Belmont MA, Nordland, 1979) is also full of interesting observations concerning the intellectual history of Russian relations with the "Christian East."

<sup>20</sup> There is an abundant secondary literature on Maximus, which is referred to in the brilliant portrait of him drawn recently by D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine Portraits*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988), pp. 201-219; cf. also J. V. Haney, *From Italy to Muscovy. The Life and Works of*

Michael Trivolis, he became attracted, as other representatives of the surviving Greek *intelligentsia* also were, by the cultural atmosphere of Renaissance Italy. Traveling first to Florence—where he read Plato under the guidance of Marsilio Ficino—then to Bologna, Padua and Milan, before spending two years in Venice as an associate of Aldus Manutius, the publisher of Greek classics, he finally worked four years in Mirandola for the Hellenist Gianfrancesco Pico. The last stage of his stay in Italy was even more remarkable: for two years (1502-4), he became a Dominican monk at St Marco's in Florence. His religious vocation was spurred by the example of St Marco's prior, the famous Girolamo Savonarola, who had been executed in 1498 for his denunciations of corruption and immorality.

In 1504, however, Michael Trivolis abandoned Italy to become an Athonite monk, under the name of Maximus. During the rest of his life, he remained discreet about his past in Italy, but there can be little doubt that his *curriculum vitae* was known not only on Mt Athos, but also by the Russian authorities. It might have been an additional asset for his mission to Muscovy: Basil III's mother, Zoe-Sophia Paleologina, had been educated in Italy and had contributed to Italian tastes at the Muscovite court.

Sent to Moscow with a hope to return eventually to his Athonite retreat, Maximus would remain there—much against his will—for over thirty years until his death in 1556. He eventually learned the Slavonic language, but his work as a translator began through the curious method of translating first a Greek patristic commentary on the Psalter into Latin, then with a Russian diplomat, Dimitri Gerasimov, making a translation from Latin into Slavonic. Some misinterpretations were inevitable. Furthermore, Maximus—a man of wide international horizons and strong critical opinions—expressed unconventional views, which were embarrassing to many. Invoking the preaching of Savonarola, he castigated the wealth of monasteries and received, on this point, the support not only of Russian hesychasts (the "Transvolgan elders"), but also of a powerful party at court. When this party lost the battle against the spokesmen of the socially-oriented abbot Joseph of Volotsk and metropolitan Daniel, Maximus' prestige at the court suffered also. As he was also calling the

*Maxim the Greek* (Munich, 1973). Maximus' writings and translations include over 365 titles (cf. A. T. Ivanov, *Literaturnoe nasledie Maksima Greka* [Leningrad, 1969], pp. 39-215), of which only a half is published in an uncritical edition (Kazan', 1859-62).

Russian metropolitanate to return to canonical obedience before the ecumenical patriarchate (as was originally intended when Jonas was consecrated by Russian bishops in 1448), and as he was suggesting that the Muscovite grand-prince should undertake an anti-Turkish crusade to liberate Constantinople (an unrealistic project, since Moscow was quite absorbed by its struggle against Poland and the Tatars), he fell out of favor completely. Arrested, repeatedly tried (in 1525 and 1531), accused of heresy and political treason, he remained in monastic confinement until around 1548. Freed by Ivan IV, he spent his last years writing and meeting many high-placed personalities. Since the seventeenth century he was locally venerated as a saint and was officially canonized in 1988.

Around 1540, in one of his writings, he used an allegory which reflects not only the tragedy of his personal life, but also the fate of the Byzantine tradition: once, he remembered, he had encountered an old woman sitting near a road, dressed in black, surrounded by menacing lions and bears, wolves and foxes. She spoke to Maximus and gave her name: *Vasileia* ("empire" or "kingdom"), and explained that the road, bare and desolate, is this "last," cursed age...<sup>21</sup>

However, the bitter nostalgia and understandable pessimism of Maximus did not represent the concluding motif of Russian Byzantinism. There came the tragedy of the seventeenth century.

The century began with a dynastic crisis, with the curious appearance of several pretenders to the throne under the name of Ivan IV's murdered son, Dimitri, and with a Polish occupation of Moscow itself. On the confused Russian political and ecclesiastical scene, there appeared Greeks, whose personalities—quite different from the venerable figures of patriarchs Jeremiah II and Meletios Pegas, or from the wise and holy Maximus—tended to compromise the Byzantine "cause" in the eyes of the Russians. Among them was Ignatius, who usurped the patriarchal throne following the forced deposition of patriarch Job. One generation later, a man called Paisios Ligarides, metropolitan of Gaza, was accepted as a major authority in ecclesiastical affairs in the restored Muscovite tsardom of Alexis Romanov (1645-76), but proved eventually to be a shady adventurer.

And yet, patriarch Nikon of Moscow (1652-8),<sup>22</sup> with uncommon

<sup>21</sup> Maximus, *Works* (ed. Kazan', 1859), II, 319-37.

<sup>22</sup> The study by N. F. Kaptelev, quoted in note 19, contains the most complete information about

energy, tried to restore what he thought to be the Byzantine traditions and to reform the Russian Church by making it ritually and organizationally identical with the contemporary Greek church. The reform was actively supported by the tsar who, in a gesture highly unusual in Muscovy, pledged obedience to the patriarch.

The motivation for the reforms came from the necessity of correcting liturgical books and practices—the very reason for which Maximus the Greek had been earlier invited to Russia. However, just as in the time of Maximus, Russia lacked experts able to define what was the "right" way of worshipping. Everyone agreed that the "right" faith had been received by the Russians from the Greeks at the time of St Vladimir, but what was the right way to restore that original ideal? Was it not by consulting ancient Greek and Russian manuscripts? A special envoy, Arseny Sukhanov, was sent to ecclesiastical centers and monasteries of the Balkans and the Middle East to acquire such manuscripts. He did obtain hundreds of them, which he brought to Moscow, making the "patriarchal" and later, "synodal" library one of the richest in the world for Greek codices. But there was nobody in seventeenth-century Russia to make competent use of them.

It is then that the powerful patriarch decided to adopt a simpler but—as he soon found out—controversial solution. He decided to correct all Russian books and practices by making them identical to the contemporary Greek printed editions, as these were used under Ottoman occupation, ignoring the fact that they were not necessarily "Byzantine" anymore. The changes he introduced were actually few, but some concerned every single faithful. Thus, instead of crossing themselves with *two* fingers (as they did before, as was customary in Byzantium in the thirteenth century), the Russians were ordered to use *three* fingers. Russian clergy were required to dress like contemporary Greeks, with *kalimavkia* (Russ. *kamilavki*), whose form was roughly that of the Turkish *fez*, and with ample-sleeved black *rhasa*, borrowed from Turkish fashion...Long hair—a sign of *civil* power in Byzantium, grown by Greek clergy as the patriarchate of Constantinople was invested with *civil* responsibilities in the Ottoman empire—was also to be adopted by Russian priests and monks (who previously used the early Christian and Byzantine practice of

Nikon's policies. See also P. Pascal, *Avvakum et les débuts du Raskol* (rep. Paris, 1983);



the tonsure [Russ. *gumentso*], having their hair cut as they entered either clergy or monastic life.

There is no doubt that patriarch Nikon and tsar Alexis were still inspired by the "Third Rome" idea. "I am a Russian," the patriarch is reported as saying, "but my faith is Greek." However, their decision to follow contemporary Greeks as models, and the authoritarian and despotic methods used in imposing the reforms, backfired badly. Millions of the faithful rebelled. The rebels were headed by former personal friends of Nikon, notably the famous archpriest (*protopop*) Avvakum. Unenlightened as they might have been, the schismatics used arguments which carried weight: The Orthodox faith, they said, might well be "Greek," but are the seventeenth century Greeks the same as the ones who taught St Vladimir? Were not the later Greeks delivered by God to Turkish slavery because of their betrayal at Florence? Did not Russia then become the last refuge of Orthodoxy? Are not the newly-printed Greek books—which Nikon had adopted as originals for Russian reprinting—actually edited in Venice, i.e., under Latin rule, where they might have been corrupted "by Jesuits"? Did not St Paul write that it is shameful for a man to pray with a covered head, and grow long hair as women do (cf. 1 Cor 11:4, 7, 14)? If church reforms are needed, are adventurers such as Paisios Ligarides (eventually condemned not only in Russia, but in Constantinople), the right advisors?

Eventually, tsar Alexis became tired of Nikon's authoritarianism and had him deposed. This deposition was confirmed by the Eastern patriarchs, but the same patriarchs—at a "great council" in Moscow (1666-7)—sanctioned all of Nikon's reforms.<sup>23</sup> But there were millions of rashly persecuted dissenters, the *Raskolniks*, or "Old Believers." Their leadership insisted on fanatic ritualism and their rebellion was indeed a cultural and religious dead end: the fact that they were, eventually, split into a multitude of sects proves the point. Nevertheless, in seventeenth-century Russia, they represented that part of the population which was religiously most committed and most unwilling to accept state and church authoritarianism.

The schism was an ultimate crisis of "Byzantinism." The reforms introduced by the official church were indeed assuring Orthodox unity:

<sup>23</sup> Texts in Tachiaos, *op. cit.*, pp. 227-31, 234-64. The council was attended by patriarch Paisios of Alexandria and Macarius of Antioch, as well as several other Greek prelates.

even today, the Russian Church preserves, with utter exactness, the seventeenth-century Greek practices adopted by Nikon. But this was a formal Byzantinism in externals. The impact of many Western ideas was obvious. Nikon, in his aspiration to have the church rule over the state, was in fact inspired by papal ideology. The religious art of the period (in Russia, as in occupied Greece) was a pseudo-Byzantine art, giving signs of ultimate decadence. Liturgical music followed Western (particularly Ukrainian) forms in Russia, and increasingly Oriental and Turkish patterns in Greece. The forced Westernization of Russia by Peter the Great—tsar Alexis' son—was forthcoming, and was in many ways the logical consequence of what happened in the seventeenth century. In some sense, the dissenters were more faithful to the spirit of Byzantine orthodoxy. Some of their traditions—iconography, music and the very spirit of medieval Eastern Christianity—were most authentically Byzantine. But their absolutization of the Russian ways, as they knew them, and their secession from the hierarchical and sacramental life of the Church, were a misinterpretation of the great, "catholic" Tradition in terms of "local traditions" only.

### *A Word of Conclusion: What is Byzantinism?*

My remarks concerning the Byzantine tradition in Russia seem to call for a rather negative conclusion. On the level of political ideology, the Muscovite tsars never seriously intended to follow the example of the medieval sovereigns of Bulgaria (tsar Symeon in the tenth century, the tsars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), or Serbia (tsar Dushan), and establish a new "Roman" empire. It appears to me that the role of the theory of "Moscow-Third Rome," as an inspiration of Russian politics in the post-medieval age, is much too often given an exaggerated importance. Whenever it was used in Muscovy, it served as a subsidiary element in the building up of a national state, not as an ideological focus. Indeed, as I noticed early, the Muscovites created a "tsardom of all Russia," not a "Roman empire," and they were doing so in the spirit of their age. The imperial idea had lost its contents in the West as well, and Europe had become a Europe of "nations." The Greeks too were using Byzantine ideas and terminology to justify calls to national liberation from the Turkish yoke, but the "Great Idea" which would inspire them would also be a "national" idea. If my sketchy review of relations between Greeks and Russians were to be extended to the eighteenth century, I

would have to speak of the two Greek prelates, Eugenios Voulgaris (1716-1806) and Nikephoros Theotokes (1731-1800), who had greater success at the court of Catherine the Great, than Maximus the Greek at that of Basil III of Moscow. But their vision was clearly dominated by the spirit of the Enlightenment, that of a "Greek" renaissance to be helped by Russian military and political might.<sup>24</sup>

And yet, there is a sense in which Christian Byzantium remained very much alive in Christian Russia, but this Byzantine continuity can be discovered primarily on the level of religious experience. First of all, the perpetuation in Russia of the Byzantine liturgical tradition—preserved with the meticulous ritual conservatism of which the Russians alone were capable—established a vision of the faith and of Christian culture which theologians call "eschatological." The realities of the kingdom of God are seen as *different* from the concrete realities of the "fallen" world: the kingdom, therefore, is to be experienced sacramentally, ritually, mystically, and not by exercising political power or engaging in social activism, to make the world better than it is...Besides, and somewhat beyond, the liturgical tradition, there is also monastic mysticism, rooted in early Eastern Christianity but actively perpetuated in the Byzantine world. This mysticism has been well understood by the Slavs, and particularly the Russians. In Russia, as in Byzantium, *the saint* was given a particular "prophetic" authority, with a certain priority not only over the state, but over ecclesiastical institutions as well. This explains not only the continuous "philocalic" tradition—essentially the tradition of the "Jesus Prayer" and contemplative monasticism—but also the emergence in nineteenth-century Russia, as in contemporary Greece, of "lay theology" (or theology done by laymen), and the general acceptance, in the entire Orthodox world, that communion with God, and therefore responsibility for the faith, belongs to all the members of the Church, so that the *charisma* of teaching, with which bishops are endowed, is an authority *within* the Church, and not *over* it.

This attitude to Christianity, which is common to the entire Orthodox world, is reflected in culture as well. Whether in Greece, or in the Balkans,

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the excellent recent study by Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II's Greek Prelate: Eugenios Voulgaris in Russia (1771-1806)* (East European Monographs, Boulder CO. Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982).

or in Russia, or in missionary countries in Asia or North America, people—often uneducated and culturally immature—are immersed, through the liturgy, into a highly sophisticated world of hellenistic poetry, patristic theology and biblical symbolism. Religious art—music and iconography—also play an important role in communicating this "liturgical" vision of the kingdom of God, created in Byzantium. Of course, the level of understanding and participation are not the same for everyone and everywhere, but the basic models and criteria are the same for all. Transcending centuries and nationalities, this religious "Byzantinism" is, indeed, the major legacy of Byzantium.

As a civilization, as a political system, Byzantium is long ago dead. But the religious vision, created at the time when the empire existed, still inspires millions. It survived the political, economic and ideological realities which today are the concern of learned Byzantinists alone. The "vision" is only obscured when it is confused with either Byzantine *political* ideology, or the pseudo-Byzantine caricatures of that ideology, used later by nation-states and their secularized politicians.

## New Life in Christ: Salvation in Orthodox Theology<sup>1</sup>

Orthodox theology is, relatively speaking, a newcomer within the fabric of contemporary theology in the West. It is being rediscovered today in the contest of the ecumenical movement, but also—perhaps more importantly—in the framework of the “return to the sources” which characterized post-World War II Roman Catholicism in France and Germany. This “return” involved a revival of interest in the Eastern Fathers of the Church and the liturgy, as a living witness to the unbroken Tradition of early Christianity.

Orthodox Christians indeed understand themselves as heirs of the Greek Fathers, and the liturgy has been for them the central and essential expression of the “catholic” nature of the Church. During the centuries which followed the fall of Constantinople in 1453, the Orthodox communities of the Middle East and the Balkans had practically no other means of learning about their faith and witnessing to their Christian commitment than the liturgy, but it proved to be powerful enough to keep those communities spiritually alive. In Russia, meanwhile, historical circumstances delayed for centuries the organic development of theological thought. It finally emerged into modernity within the framework of a Western school system and methodology, introduced in the eighteenth century by Peter the Great and adopted later in other Orthodox countries as well.

I will begin this study by a brief overview of theological trends as they developed in the modern period. Such an introduction is necessary, I believe, to explain the picture of theological diversity and vitality characteristic of Orthodoxy today and rarely noticed in the West, where interest in Eastern Christianity is limited to a few specialists.

<sup>1</sup> First published in *Theological Studies* 50 (New York, 1989), pp. 481-99. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

### Trends in Soteriology

Coined by Georges Florovsky, the concept of a "Western captivity of the Orthodox mind" is an inevitable and adequate characterization of theological realities in the Orthodox world in the period which followed the fall of Constantinople and which lasted practically until the nineteenth century. The Church in the East continued to live through its sacramental life, through its liturgy, through the spiritual tradition of a few monastic centers; but books and bookmen, who pretended to represent theology, were imprisoned in the categories determined by the problems and conflicts of Western thought: scholasticism, Reformation, Counter Reformation, Enlightenment. Writing about the period, Florovsky aptly and sarcastically notes: "The West theologizes, but the East remains silent; worst of all, without thinking and belatedly, it repeats Western backlogs."<sup>2</sup> This was true of the various "Orthodox confessions" which appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and much time elapsed before the Orthodox learned how to use their own tradition creatively, without surrendering to the fateful habit of embracing Protestant arguments against the Roman Catholics and scholastic Latin ideas against the thought of the Reformation. Indeed, the whole period was dominated by defensive polemics, which—in the case of the Orthodox world—proceeded out of the real context of the Orthodox "mind."

The hopelessness of this *de facto* passivity of Orthodox theology was first formally acknowledged by Russian lay theologians, the so-called "older Slavophiles" in the 50's and 60's of the last century, who began to discover that solutions to Western problems are to be found in the Eastern tradition. "The older Slavophiles," Florovsky writes, "deduced Russian tasks from Western needs, from the issues which the other half of the Christian world would not or could not resolve." This is why, Florovsky continues, "a creative renaissance of the Orthodox world is a necessary condition for solving the ecumenical problem,"<sup>3</sup> and most Orthodox theologians would agree with him that such a renaissance requires a recovery of basic patristic intuitions, which could then be applied to the problems of today.

2 *Puti russkago bogosloviia* ("The Ways of Russian Theology") (2nd ed.: Paris, YMCA, 1981), p. 515.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 514.

It was inevitable that a Latinizing, scholastic, basically "Anselmian" view of redemption and salvation would be reproduced in such documents as the *Orthodox Confession* of Peter Moghila (1640).<sup>4</sup> The *Confession* itself was actually a reaction against the Calvinistic character of another "confession"—that of the patriarch Cyril Loukaris—and represented a good example of how arguments adopted from the Counter Reformation could be adapted to combat Protestant thought in an Orthodox milieu. What is more remarkable is that this scholastic methodology would survive even as a theological revival was taking place in Orthodox textbooks of systematic theology.<sup>5</sup> The reasons for this survival might often have been simply a matter of scholarly routine, a sense of security offered by an orderly and rational presentation with an appearance of conservatism and scientific approach. No real creative use of the intellectual power contained in the medieval Latin systems was involved in such textbooks, which remained rather of good example of "Western backlogs" mentioned by Florovsky.

Parallel to and independent of established theological schools, a revival of monastic spirituality was taking place in Orthodoxy, starting particularly with the publication of the great patristic texts in the *Philokalia* of St Nicodemus the Hagiorite (1782), its Slavonic translation by St Paisy Velichkovsky (d. 1794), and its Russian edition by St Theophanes the Recluse (d. 1894).<sup>6</sup> The tradition of Byzantine hesychasm and spirituality

4 Published by Peter Moghila, metropolitan of Kiev, and later confirmed (with some modifications) by Eastern patriarchs, the *Confession*, originally written in Latin, was translated into Greek and Slavonic (cf. Eng. tr. by R. P. Popivchak, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1975). It was meant to be a reaction against the Calvinistic *Confession* of Cyril Loukaris, patriarch of Constantinople (1629), but in substance and in form it is a document of the Latin Counter Reformation ("le plan, la matière...les expressions mêmes de la CO lui sont venues de l'Occident": A. Malvy et M. Viller, *La Confession orthodoxe de Pierre Moghila* [Rome: Oriental Institute, 1927], p. xciv).

5 Starting with Makary Bulgakov, *Pravoslavnoe dogmaticheskoe bogoslovie* ("Orthodox Dogmatic Theology") (5 vols.; St Petersburg, 1849-53; anonymous French tr., Paris, 1859-60), and ending with the Greek textbooks of C. Androustos, *Domatikê tês Orthodoxou Anavolikês Ekklesiâs* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Eastern Church") (Athens: Kratous, 1907), and P. Trembelas, *Dogmatikê tês Orthodoxou Katholikês Ekklesiâs* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church") (Athens: Adelphotês Theologôn Hê Zôê, 1958; French tr. by P. Doumont, 3 vols., Editions de Chévetogne: 1966).

6 There are several expanded, multivolume commented and annotated modern editions of the *Philokalia*; a Romanian (by D. Staniloae, Bucharest, 1947 ff.), a French (Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1979 ff.), and an English (by G. E. H. Palmer, P. Sherrard, and Kallistos Ware, London: Faber and Faber, 1979 ff.) versions are in process of publication.

represented by this trend placed a major emphasis on the notion of spiritual progress of the individual and the community, implying synergy between divine grace and human freedom and refusing any legalistic understanding of redemption, sacramental grace, and therefore salvation. The "philocalic" revival contributed greatly to modern developments in Orthodox theology.

One other development, whose impact on theology was decisive and which could not have occurred without the influence exercised on intellectually oriented laity by the monastic revival, is the emergence, first in Russia but later also in the Balkans and the Middle East, of theological thought independent of the ecclesiastical academic establishment. One dominant feature represented by this "lay" theology and adopted from the monastic tradition is a sharp critique of rationalism and legalism. Men such as I. Kireevsky (1806-56) were "born to philosophy" under the influence of Schelling, but the same Kireevsky dedicated much of his energy to the publication and study of the Greek Fathers, published in cooperation with the famous *starsy* (monastic "elders") of Optino. This led him to the discovery of the Church and, particularly, of "tradition," not so much as authority and criterion of truth, but rather and essentially as a "milieu" of "wholesome knowledge," of communion with God and fellowship within a redeemed humanity. Kireevsky's friend and contemporary A. S. Khomiakov (1804-60) is generally better known, particularly for his concept of "conciliarity" (*sobornost*), which in fact appeals to the same principle of communion between free persons as the context and the condition for authentic knowledge of God and the Truth. For Khomiakov this communion is to be found in the "One Church."<sup>7</sup>

The theology of these early Slavophiles was initially looked at with great suspicion by the scholastic establishment, but by the end of the nineteenth century some of their most important ecclesiological and gnosiological intuitions won wide acceptance not only in Russia, but also in Orthodox theology at large. This acceptance—which did not preclude criticism of some of the more romantic aspects of their thought—was based on the obvious fact that they were faithful to the notion of "com-

7 For a recent treatment of, and a full bibliography on, these two authors, see P. K. Christoff, *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism: A Study in Ideas 1: A. S. Khomiakov* (The Hague: Mouton, 1961); 2: *I. V. Kireevskij* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972).

munion" inherited from the early Christian and Greek patristic tradition, and that communion, rather than any other juridical and rationalistic model, was adequate for the Orthodox view of "life in Christ" and salvation.

In Russian polemics against legalism and rationalism dominate the thought of such major and very established theologians as Anthony Khrapovitsky<sup>8</sup> and Sergius Stragorodsky.<sup>9</sup> In his reaction against scholasticism, Anthony, a great admirer of Dostoevsky, went to some extremes of moralism and psychologism, which would be congenial to pietistic trends in liberal Protestantism: redemption, he thought, really took place in Gethsemane, when Jesus manifested his ultimate "compassionate love" in his prayer for sinful humanity before the passion. This moralizing trend found its most consistent, and definitely liberal, expression in the world of M. M. Tareev (1866-1934), a well-known and influential professor of ethics at the Theological Academy of Moscow.<sup>10</sup>

Side by side with the "moralists," the antirationalistic trend was represented by a different school of thought, inspired primarily by the task of overcoming philosophical secularism and atheism. Initiated primarily by V. S. Soloviev (d. 1900), this school, heavily dependent upon German idealism, is known as sophiology. It conceived salvation not in historical but in cosmic terms, positing an ontologically-divine nature of creation, with the concept of *Sophia*, or Divine Wisdom, revealing both the essence of God and the foundation of created beings. The system, similar in its fundamental approaches to the thought of Paul Tillich or Teilhard de Chardin, could not escape the danger of pantheism, although the main disciples of Soloviev, S. N. Bulgakov (d. 1949)<sup>11</sup> and particularly P.

8 His writings were first published in Kazan, 1909 (repr. Jordanville, NY, 1956-69); particularly controversial is his *Dogmat iskupleniia* ("the Dogma of Redemption," *Bogoslovskii vestnik*, 1917). Later metropolitan of Kiev, Anthony (d. 1936) became the head of the "Russian synod abroad" in Yugoslavia.

9 *Pravoslavnoe uchenie o spasenii* ("The Orthodox Doctrine of Salvation") (St Petersburg, 1895). Sergius headed the Russian Church during the tragic years of persecution and was elected patriarch in 1943.

10 On Tareev there is a recent, unpublished Columbia University dissertation by Paul Vallière; cf. also P. Vallière, "The Liberal Tradition in Russian Orthodox Tradition," in *The Legacy of St Vladimir* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989).

11 An apostate seminarian, a Marxist professor of economics, then a returnee to the faith, a priest, and a seminary dean, S. N. Bulgakov is the author of a series of monumental treatises which have been recently translated into French; cf., e.g., *Du Verbe incarné* (Paris: Aubier, 1982);



Florensky (d. probably 1938),<sup>12</sup> attempted to place sophiology in the context of the patristic tradition.

All these tendencies and trends are manifestations of a searching, trying to express the Christian message of salvation in the context of modern needs and problems. It does appear, however, that a contemporary consensus is emerging on the basis of a more rigorous approach to patristic thought and tradition, which is facilitated by the results of revived patristic studies. This neo-patristic theology is dominant today in most Orthodox countries, as well as in the West. Its better-known representatives are authors such as Georges Florovsky,<sup>13</sup> as well as Justin Popovich in Serbia<sup>14</sup> and particularly Dumitru Staniloae in Romania,<sup>15</sup> and Vladimir Lossky in France.<sup>16</sup> In Greece, the patristic revival is expressed in a number of publications and several younger theologians—C. Yannaras,<sup>17</sup> P. Nellas,<sup>18</sup> and others—are relating patristic thought on salvation to modern issues in a creative way.

In the context of the patristic revival, another trend, with direct relevance to the issue of christology and salvation, is represented by what is frequently referred to as "eucharistic ecclesiology." The term itself was coined by N. Afanasiev, whose major intuition is the identification of each local "catholic" eucharistic community with the Church as such, and deducing from that original ecclesiology (best represented by St Ignatius of Antioch around 100

*Philosophie de l'économie* (Paris: Aubier, 1987); in English see J. Pain and N. Zernov, eds., *A Bulgakov Anthology* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

12 The author of a theological synthesis, *Stolp i utverzhdenie istiny* (Moscow, 1914; Fr tr., *La colonne et le fondement de la vérité* [Paris: Aubier, 1987]); and many writings which are being gradually published today, Fr Florensky—sometimes referred to as a Russian Teilhard—died as a confessor of the faith in a concentration camp. He exercises a very great posthumous influence upon intellectuals returning to the faith today.

13 Cf. G. Florovsky, *Collected Works* (several vols. published, Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1978).

14 Cf. *Dogmatika Pravoslavne Cerkve* ("Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church") (Belgrade, 1978).

15 The author of a comprehensive work on dogmatics, Fr Staniloae is able to relate patristic theology to contemporary philosophical thought in a truly original way. A representative collection of his articles appeared in English in D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980).

16 Lossky's writings (with the exception of his monumental dissertation on Eckhart, Paris: Aubier, 1960) are translated into English and published by St Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY: *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, 1976; *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 1974; *Orthodox Theology*, 1978.

17 Cf., e.g., *The Freedom of Morality* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

18 *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987).

A.D.) a permanent criterion for understanding not only ecclesiology but all aspects of soteriology.<sup>19</sup> The eschatological implications of eucharistic ecclesiology, and its importance not only in terms of church order but also in christology and pneumatology, are developed by John Zizioulas.<sup>20</sup> Other dimensions of eucharistic ecclesiology, particularly important in defining Christian ethos, Christian witness in the contemporary world, and the mission of the Church, are best formulated by Alexander Schmemmann.<sup>21</sup>

In spite of their variety, these various trends of contemporary Orthodox theology show agreement on the point that salvation is to be understood in terms of communion, sanctification, or deification (the *theōsis* of the Greek Fathers), that it is based on a synergy of divine grace and human freedom. This general approach to the theology of redemption and salvation has obvious implications for understanding the function of church institutions. Does it run the danger—as often noted by its Western critics—of indulging in a sort of gnostic monophysitism? The answer to this question can only come from one's understanding (or misunderstanding) of the basic content of the Chalcedonian formula, stating that Christ was both God and man.

### Christ, The Savior

A most prevailing fear among many is that the recognition of Christ's divinity implies a diminution of his humanity. The high christology or the descending christology of the Gospel of John and, later, of the entire patristic tradition is often viewed today as a major danger not only for sound exegesis but also for spirituality. Exegetically, it gives primacy to supernatural and miraculous events, such as the resurrection, and makes any demythologizing difficult. On the level of spirituality, it calls Christians to forget the *humanum*, to look for mystical escapes away from social and historical responsibilities. Indeed, if the goal of the faith is to seek Jesus pre-existing as God, his human life is of no real interest: "He looks like a man, speaks like a man, suffers and dies like a man. But underneath he is divine, and his genuine humanity is suspect."<sup>22</sup>

19 The legacy of Afanasiev is summarized in his book *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit* (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

20 Cf. an easily accessible collection of his articles in *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

21 Cf. particularly *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973) and *The Eucharist* (*ibid.*, 1987).

22 G. O'Collins, *What are They Saying About Jesus?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 2.

How can a real humanity in Christ be expressed? Some modern christologies had recourse to schemes known as kenotic. Using, rather arbitrarily, the Pauline expression of Phil 2:7 ("he emptied himself"—ἐαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν) and giving it a specific philosophical interpretation, these christologies imagine Christ emptying himself of his divinity as he was becoming more human. In his human death the "emptying" reached its ultimate point: the man Jesus died, while God, immortal by nature, remained free of death.<sup>23</sup> His person is then imagined as containing constantly-shifting levels of divinity and humanity, depending upon his acting, either as God or as man. "The pre-existent One," writes John Knox, "emptied himself of such attributes of death as omnipotence and omniscience but retained the more important qualities, and in so doing exemplified not only the very heart of divinity, but also what humanity truly is."<sup>24</sup> Those who share a similar concern for preserving an authentic and full humanity in Jesus try to rehabilitate the Antiochian school of christology represented by Theodore of Mopsuestia and, eventually, Nestorius. In that tradition the human attributes of Christ are predicated of him as "Son of Mary," distinct from the Son of God. Although the historical Nestorianism of the fifth century stopped short of affirming clearly the existence of "two Sons" in the πρόσωπον, or "person," of Christ, there is no doubt that such a conclusion comes out logically from their presuppositions. This is recognized by those who even today interpret the Chalcedonian definition in 451 as a welcome posthumous rehabilitation of Theodore after the victory of St Cyril of Alexandria at Ephesus (431)<sup>25</sup> and consider that the reaffirmation

23 The kenotic scheme is also used in the sophiology of S. Bulgakov, who considers the kenotic theories as "the most important current of christological thought since the ecumenical councils." Bulgakov writes: "The eternal God makes Himself a God-in-becoming in God-man. He empties Himself of His eternal divinity, lowers Himself to the level of human life and in it and through it makes man capable of receiving God" (*Du Verbe incarné* pp. 146-47).

24 *The Humanity and Divinity of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 104. One wonders who can define what are the "more important" qualities of God.

25 Cf., e.g., F. J. van Beeck: "To reduce the humanity of Christ to a mere anhypostatic nature goes against the intention of Chalcedon, which never meant to indulge in an effort to 'salvage' Christ's divinity by reducing his humanity to a 'pure nature'" (*Christ Proclaimed: Christology in Rhetoric* [New York: Paulist Press, 1979], p. 51); also Ch. Moeller: "How can the human nature of Jesus be perfectly consubstantial with ours if it is devoid of a human hypostasis?" ("Le Chalcedonisme et le Néo-Chalcedonisme en orient de 451 à la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle": in Grillmeier-Bacht, *Das Konzil von Chalkedon I* [Würzburg: Echter, 1951], p. 697); for a recent critical review, see G. Havrilak, "Chalcedon and Orthodox Christology Today," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989), pp. 127-45.

of Cyrillian christology by the Fifth Council (553) was in fact a victory of Monophysitism in the East, under the cover of an artificial theory today called neo-Chalcedonianism.

The common feature of all such attitudes is the belief that divinity and humanity are ontologically incompatible, and that such concepts as communion or deification, if taken literally and seriously, are inappropriate borrowings from Neoplatonism, leading to a denial of true humanity in Jesus, with all the implicit theological, ethical, and historical consequences of such a denial.

Clearly, the problem here lies on two levels: the level of anthropology, and the dimension of divine (and human) personhood as expressed in the concept of *hypostasis*.<sup>26</sup> On both levels the tradition expressed in post-Chalcedonian developments meets several concerns of modern thought.

1) It has been often noted that the Eastern patristic tradition understood humanity in terms of participation in God as, in a sense, its *natural* characteristic. The normal human existence as created by God presupposes "grace." In describing Adam before the Fall, St Gregory of Nyssa speaks of his "beatitude of immortality," "justice," and "purity."<sup>27</sup> Jean Daniélou, in his well-known book on Gregory, notes: "Gregory identifies realities which Eastern theology considers distinct...Man, created 'according to the image,' is for Gregory what man is by nature (φύσις). And the image includes what we call intellectual life, the νοῦς, and the supernatural life, the πνεῦμα."<sup>28</sup> W. J. Burghardt showed a similar dimension in the thought of Cyril of Alexandria,<sup>29</sup> and there is no doubt that the thought of the Greek Fathers on this point is consistent with the theocentric anthropology expressed already in the second century by St Irenaeus of Lyons. Today a theocentric anthropology is not only maintained by Orthodox theologians<sup>30</sup> but constitutes a

26 These points are made by J. Breck in his brief "Reflections on the 'Problem' of Chalcedonian Christology," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 33 (1989), pp. 147-57, and are developed in my book *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975).

27 *De opif. hom.* 16 (PG 44, 177-85).

28 *Platonisme et théologie mystique: Essai sur la doctrine spirituelle de saint Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), p. 54.

29 *The Image of God in Man according to Cyril of Alexandria* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1957), p. 38.

30 Cf., for instance, P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), pp. 21-42; Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (*ibid.*, 1983), pp. 21-26.

hopeful and widespread development among Roman Catholics, particularly characteristic of Karl Rahner.

The concept of communion with God or deification (*theosis*), which in Greek patristic thought was used to define the authentic human destiny and also the purpose of man's creation by God, can be misunderstood in pantheistic terms. The Neoplatonic formulae and other philosophical expressions used by the patristic authors can contribute to such misinterpretations. In fact, however, the concept of *theosis* is to be understood in a christological context of redemption, which excludes pantheism.

It is significant that St Athanasius of Alexandria, who coined the famous formula "The Logos assumed humanity, that we might become God,"<sup>31</sup> also defended (against the Neoplatonic tradition of Origen) the absolute transcendence of the divine nature: creatures exist by the *will* of God, as distinct from the divine Logos, who is Son of God by *nature*. "The nature of creatures," he writes, "...is fluid, impotent, mortal, and composite,"<sup>32</sup> and "they can even cease to exist if the Creator so wishes."<sup>33</sup> Athanasius' thought implies a radical rejection of Origen's vision of God as the *eternal Creator* by nature, and of his view of the original (as well as eschatological) state of created beings as participants of God's very essence.<sup>34</sup> For Athanasius, therefore, deification can only be based upon the historical fact of the incarnation: the assumption by the Logos, consubstantial with the Father (and not with the creation), of the mortal, limited, and perishing human nature. This does not exclude a theology of "*logoi* of creatures" and the idea that the incarnate Logos is also the Logos "through whom are things were made," but even the pre-existing plan of God about creation lies on the level of God's *will* (or his pre-eternal, uncreated "energies")—not his nature or essence. God, as Creator and as Savior, is a personal God, exercising the power of his love in absolute freedom.

The christology of Cyril of Alexandria is also based on the notion of a *self-giving* God. His is a theology of the Emmanuel—"God with us" (Mt 1:23)—affirming the *personal* assumption by the divine Logos of all the

<sup>31</sup> *On the Incarnation* 54 (PG 25, 192B).

<sup>32</sup> *Against the Heathen* 41 (PG 25, 81CD).

<sup>33</sup> *Against the Arians* 1:20 (PG 26, 55A).

<sup>34</sup> On this see G. Florovsky, "The Concept of Creation in St Athanasius," *Studia Patristica* 6, part 4 (TU 81; Berlin, 1962), pp. 36-67; cf. also J. Meyendorff, "Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983), pp. 27-37.

aspects of humanity in its fallen state, including death. Theopaschism, i.e., confession of the fact that the Logos was the only *subject* of death on Golgotha,<sup>35</sup> is an essential point of his polemics against Nestorius.<sup>36</sup> It did not imply that God could suffer or die in his very nature or essence: the *incarnate* Logos suffered death, not the divine nature. The point of Cyril was to affirm that God alone is the Savior, entirely upon his personal action and initiative (although it does imply a free human response). Actually, an interesting parallelism can be established between the christology of Cyril and the neo-orthodox thought of Karl Barth.<sup>37</sup>

But if such is indeed the context of the doctrine of deification, how are we to understand theological anthropology and the idea, referred to above, that participation in God is, in a sense, a "natural" human characteristic? Was not affinity and participation an element of humanity on the level of creation, independently of the historical incarnation of the Logos?

The answer to this question was sometimes found—unsatisfactorily, I believe—in the notion of an impersonal, ontological affinity or continuity between the Creator and the creatures. Speaking of the incarnation, S. Bulgakov asks: "Do people sufficiently realize that this dogma is not primary, but derivative? In itself it demands the prior existence of absolutely necessary dogmatic formulations concerning a *primordial God-man-hood*."<sup>38</sup> This approach seemed attractive also for many in the modern West who were concerned with transcending the secular perception of the created universe—for instance, Paul Tillich or Teilhard de Chardin.

Whatever partial truth there might be in their fully legitimate concern for establishing an authentically theocentric conception of creation, they miss the personal or hypostatic dimension both in God and in humanity. Indeed, it is this hypostatic dimension which appears in the incarnation as a unique manifestation of divinity and humanity united in one concrete, historical person.

<sup>35</sup> "If anyone does not confess that the Logos of God suffered in the flesh, was crucified in the flesh and tasted death in the flesh...let him be anathema." Third Letter to Nestorius, in J. Alberigo et al., eds., *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta* (3rd ed.: Basel: Herder, 1962), p. 61.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, pp. 13-28, 68-89.

<sup>37</sup> At least the "early" Barth—the author of the *Römerbrief* and of the earlier parts of the *Dogmatik*.

<sup>38</sup> *A Bulgakov Anthology*, p. 152. For Bulgakov, and for other disciples of Vladimir Soloviev, such as P. Florensky, the "primordial God-man-hood" is, of course, the *Sophia*, or Wisdom of God in its uncreated and created aspects.

2) Human freedom, which belongs to each human person, appears in the Greek patristic tradition as the real expression of the *image* of God. "Adam," writes St Basil, "received from the Creator a free life, because his soul had been created after the image of God."<sup>39</sup> The same idea is developed even further by Gregory of Nyssa<sup>40</sup> and by Cyril of Alexandria. "Man," writes Cyril, "from the origin of creation, received control over his desires and could freely follow the inclinations of his choice, for the Deity, whose image he is, is free."<sup>41</sup> Therefore the freedom of the human person points to divine freedom, which is the origin of creation itself.

The incarnation clearly implies a dimension of the hypostasis or personal existence of God, distinct from the natural or essential dimension. By nature or essence, God is changeless. In his essence, therefore, there is no becoming. Nevertheless, "the Word became (ἐγένετο) flesh" (Jn 1:14), i.e., he undertook change by becoming something he was not before. Furthermore, since human nature is necessarily changeable and exists in history, the changes in the human life of Jesus had to be appropriated not essentially but personally by the Logos, including death itself: otherwise he would not have been fully human. It was, therefore, the very divine hypostasis of the Son which came out of divine transcendence and became visible and accessible in the humanity of Jesus, restoring human nature in accordance with its divine prototype.

If christology is, indeed, to imply the inaccessibility and absolute transcendence of divine nature, as well as the openness and existential changeability of the hypostasis, the formula adopted by the Council of Chalcedon—Jesus Christ as "one hypostasis in two natures"—acquires a clarity and relevance which was probably not fully perceived even by its authors. The full implications of the formula would be developed gradually in what is (perhaps inadequately) termed Byzantine neo-Chalcedonianism. Indeed, the basic soteriological intuition of Cyril—the personal unity of the incarnate Logos—and the need to distinguish between the divine and human natures had to be fully acknowledged *together*. It became gradually clear how, on the one hand, the hypostatic life in God expresses a mutual openness of the three hypostases to one another, and

<sup>39</sup> *Hom.* 6 (PG 31, 344B).

<sup>40</sup> J. Gaith, *La conception de la liberté chez Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris: Vrin, 1953), pp. 40-66.

<sup>41</sup> *Glaphyra on Gen.* 1 (PG 69, 24C).

how, on the other hand, the hypostasis of the Son opened itself to creation and appropriated humanity, making it to be the "humanity of God."<sup>42</sup>

Thus the openness of the divine hypostases is a mutual openness within the Holy Trinity, but it is also an openness downwards—toward creation. It reveals the meaning of the definition of God as love, because love implies personal mutuality and relationships—eternal and transcendent in the Trinity, but also expanding beyond the being of God into the temporal being of creatures willed by God.

On the other hand, human beings also are, hypostatically, open upwards. As Lars Thunberg noted in the case of St Maximus the Confessor, "Maximus is able to express his conviction that there is a personal aspect in man's life, which goes, as it were, beyond his nature, and represents his inner unity, as well as his relationship to God."<sup>43</sup>

Thus the hypostatic dimension of divine Trinitarian life, as well as its image in humanity, excludes the idea that redemption, salvation, and deification are automatic or magical processes of absorption of the human by the divine. On the side of God, as well as on the side of humanity, they imply personal, free relations. In Christ one meets the hypostasis of the divine Logos, who assumed the fulness of humanity. Christ was not a human hypostasis. If that were the case, the man Jesus would be individualized on a created level, making "life in Christ" impossible. Indeed, one created hypostasis cannot exist in another. Human persons are irreducible to each other and always preserve their uniqueness. The decisive factor in salvation is that the hypostasis of the Logos is the prototype of which each human being is the image. His humanity is not only the humanity of a human individual, but it is also our common humanity which he assumed in its fallen state and glorified through his death and resurrection. The incarnate Logos calls us to share in his saved and glorified humanity, through a free personal decision, through baptism, through eucharistic communion, and to be transformed from the "first man...made of dust" into "the second Man, the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor 15:47).

<sup>42</sup> The implications are brilliantly developed by the Romanian theologians Dumitru Staniloae, "Trinitarian Relations and the Life of the Church," in *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), p. 11-44.

<sup>43</sup> *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968), p. 119.

### The "New Adam"

The New Testament applies to Jesus the image of the suffering servant described by the Second Isaiah (Is 52-53; cf. Mt 8:17; Rom 15:21, etc.): "He was wounded for our transgressions...He took our infirmities and bore our diseases...They made his grave with the wicked." The image is that of a Messiah who suffers and dies, voluntarily accepting the consequences of humanity's sins. That suffering and death are the consequences, on a cosmic level, of Adam's sin, which qualifies the biblical perception of created reality after the Fall.

It has been often recognized that Eastern patristic thought ignores the notion of a transmission of *guilt* from Adam to his descendants. However, it does not ignore the very fact of *cosmic fallenness*. This fallenness is not expressed in terms of divine punishment inflicted upon all humans (the Augustinian *massa damnata*) from parents to children, but rather in terms of a usurpation or illegitimate tyranny exercised by Satan upon God's creation. Humans are rather seen as victims of the universal reign of death (indeed Satan is "a murder from the beginning": Jn 8:44). "Through fear of death, they are subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb 2:15). What is being transmitted from parents to children is not sin but mortality and slavery, creating a condition where sin is inevitable: "Having become mortal," writes Theodoret of Cyrus, "[Adam and Eve] conceived mortal children, and mortal beings are necessarily subject to passions and fears, to pleasures and sorrows, to anger and hatred."<sup>44</sup> Patristic references can easily be multiplied, and their context is understandable if one remembers that the Greek Fathers read the Greek original of the famous passage of Rom 5:12 ("As sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [or "and because of death"] all have sinned") and were not conditioned by the Latin mistranslation, which implied that all sinned "in Adam."<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Commentary on Rom.* (PG 80, 1245A).

<sup>45</sup> The Latin version of ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον in Rom 5:12 is *in quo omnes peccaverunt*. The masculine *quo* must refer to "one man," mentioned earlier in the sentence: "all have sinned in Adam." The Greek does not allow for such a meaning, and admits two grammatical possibilities: (a) if ἐφ' ᾧ is a neuter and means "because," the sentence defines death as the punishment for individual sins of any human (not "original" sin); (b) if it is a masculine, it refers to "death" (θάνατος), so that death—as cosmic, personalized reality—becomes the cause of individual human sins. It is in that sense that the text was read by Theodoret and Theodore, as well as by

It is the mortal, corruptible, and fallen humanity which was assumed by the Logos. This was well understood particularly by the Alexandrian Fathers, promoters of a high christology: Athanasius and Cyril. And this is precisely the reason why their christological positions made theopaschism inevitable: the divine Logos himself voluntarily assumed mortal humanity and therefore had to die in the flesh. The implication was not "anthropological minimalism," as Florovsky once wrote,<sup>46</sup> but, on the contrary, the affirmation that humanity and its fallen condition were such a real and crucial fact that they brought about a *self-emptying* of God himself as condition for salvation and true restoration.

That the high Alexandrian christology does not imply a diminution of humanity in Jesus is also shown in the sixth-century debate around the Aphotartodocetism of Julian of Halicarnassus. The point of Julian was simple: since death and corruption (φθορά) are consequences of human sin, they could not have been present in Jesus, who did not sin. Thus, according to Julian, Jesus possessed an "incorruptible" (ἀφθαρτος) humanity. Julian's critics were right in saying that he was in fact a Docetist: the death of Jesus on the cross was only an "appearance," not a real experience of what death is for other human beings.<sup>47</sup> But if one conceives of Christ as sharing the determinism of corruptible and fallen humanity, what happens to divine freedom? Did not the Logos suffer voluntarily? The rejection of Aphotartodocetism by the Church was not at all in-

many other Greek authors, including Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, and later Byzantine theologians; on this problem see J. Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (3rd ed.; New York: Fordham University, 1987), pp. 143-46. The clear divergence between the Greek and the Augustinian traditions on "original sin" is widely acknowledged by historians; cf. e.g. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A. & C. Black, 1958), pp. 348-52.

<sup>46</sup> *Vizantijskie ottzy* (Paris: YMCA, 1933), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> See the concise definition of Aphotartodocetism by St John of Damascus: "They consider that the Lord's body was incorruptible from the time of its formation; they also confess that the Lord suffered the passions—hunger, thirst, tiredness—but that he suffered them in a way different from our own: while we suffer them as a natural necessity. Christ, they say, suffered them freely (ἡκούσιως) and he was not subjected to the laws of nature" (*On the Heresies* 84 [PG 94, 156A]); on Aphotartodocetism see R. Draguet, *Julien d'Halicarnasse et sa controverse avec Sévère d'Antioch sur l'incorruptibilité du corps du Christ* (Louvain, 1924); cf. also Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, pp. 87-88, 165-66. Of course, one cannot deny divine freedom if one believes in the divinity of Christ, but within the Orthodox tradition (as distinct from Aphotartodocetism) divine freedom is exercised in the incarnation as a whole: mortality and corruptibility were assumed by the Son of God from the beginning of his human life.



tended, however, as a denial of divine freedom. Indeed, the incarnation in all its aspects was an expression of the free will of God. But God willed precisely that, *as man*, Jesus, since his conception in the womb of Mary, would be fully conditioned by what our human, fallen existence is: he lived in time, “grew in wisdom,” did not know, suffered and died. On the other hand, the hypostatic union—i.e., the conception and the birth of the God-man Jesus—is not yet by itself a deification of Jesus’ human nature. Deification would have been a somewhat automatic happening if, as some have supposed, the incarnation was simply the manifestation of a pre-existing God-manhood of the Logos, fulfilled when he became a human being. In fact, the incarnation implied tragedy and struggle. The Creator, by assuming created and fallen flesh, met evil and death face to face. He met and overcame these realities of the fallen world, which he did not create but only tolerated. This tolerance reached its ultimate point when the incarnate Son of God accepted a human death on the cross: this ultimate point was also his ultimate victory.

Modern New Testament criticism has often been concerned with the psychology of Jesus, and with such questions as his messianic consciousness. One wonders sometimes whether such concerns are not a blind alley, since, as a learned Anglican divine wrote, “It is indeed both ridiculous and irreverent to ask what it feels like to be God incarnate.”<sup>48</sup> However, what cannot be denied—and what a high christology, affirming the full pre-existing divinity of the unique person of Jesus Christ, does not deny—is that “being human” necessarily implies change and growth from infancy to adulthood; that the humanity assumed by the Son of God was our “corruptible” humanity which needed salvation and which he led in a passage (the Christian Passover) from death to life; that “Jesus the Son of God...has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15; cf. 1 Pet 2:22).<sup>49</sup>

This last point—“without sin”—also makes a high christology inevitable, because God alone, and no creature, can be said to be totally above sin, which is a conscious, personal act of rebellion against divine will. It is because he was God, not as “mere man,” that Jesus was able to overcome

<sup>48</sup> *Christ, the Christian and the Church* (London: Longmans, Green, 1946), p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. my article “Christ’s Humanity: The Paschal Mystery,” *St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 31 (1987), pp. 5-40.

the temptations inherent in fallen humanity: “You shall not tempt the Lord your God,” said Jesus to the tempter (Mt 4:7; Lk 4:12). Although no philosophical, rational, or psychological explanation can be found for it, here is the very content of the “good news” revealed in Christ: that God himself has placed himself on our level, within our very existence; that he is no longer a distant heavenly being but the One who is personally, hypostatically “with us”—even in temptations and in death—the Emmanuel.

It is furthermore important to recognize that the Chalcedonian patristic tradition upholding a high christology stands firmly against the Monophysitic or the Monotheletic or any other unilaterally theocentric views of salvation. The christology of Maximus the Confessor, which defends the existence of a human will in Christ distinct from the divine, is very explicit in affirming that Christ’s humanity was not a passive instrument of divinity, but that it exercised within time and space a true human freedom. Maximus illustrates this in his commentary on two episodes of Christ’s life: the baptism in the Jordan and the agony in Gethsemane.

As Jesus was coming out of the Jordan—where he deliberately identified himself with the condition of the others, being baptized by John—he “saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove...” (Mk 1:11). For Maximus this was a “second birth” of Jesus, modeling our own baptismal regeneration.

The incarnation took first the form of a bodily birth because of my condemnation, but it was later followed by a birth in the Spirit through baptism which had been so neglected [by a fallen humanity]; [this occurred] for the sake of my salvation, so that I may be recalled by grace, or, more clearly, so that I may be created anew.<sup>50</sup>

In Jesus, therefore, the synergy of divine and human will, a condition for the reconciling mystery of communion between divinity and humanity, including his human experience of a “new birth” at the conclusion of his human maturing and at the beginning of his messianic ministry.

What occurred at Gethsemane, according to Maximus, is another and ultimate human acceptance by Jesus of the will of the Father for the salvation of the world. Indeed, Gethsemane did not mean resistance or

<sup>50</sup> *Amb* (PG 91, 1348D). Scholarly literature on St Maximus is abundant. On this particular point of his christology, see F. Heinzer, “L’Explication trinitaire de l’économie chez Maxime le Confesseur,” in *Maximus Confessor: Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 1-5 Septembre, 1980*, ed. F. Heinzer and Ch. von Schönborn (Fribourg, 1982), pp. 159-72.

rebellion, but the agonizing exercise of Christ's human will. In the divine nature and Trinitarian will, the Logos willed our salvation at all times (φύσει θελητικός καὶ ἐνεργητικός τῆς ἡμῶν ὑπάρχων ἐγνωρίζετο σωτηρίας).

This salvation he willed with the Father and the Spirit; but [for this same salvation] he also [as a human being] became obedient to the Father unto death, even death on a cross (Phil 2:8), realizing in himself (in his divine hypostasis) the great mystery of his coming to us in the flesh.<sup>51</sup>

This christology illustrates again the distinction, always characteristic of the Greek Fathers, between the notions of hypostasis (or person) and nature. As we noted earlier, the hypostasis of the Son is not the same as divine "nature," because the hypostasis "becomes," whereas "nature" is absolutely unchangeable. The hypostasis, by assuming humanity and making it "its own," becomes a "composite hypostasis" (πρόσωπον σύν-θετος<sup>52</sup>). A person, divine or human, is not, therefore, a simple manifestation of "nature" (an individual), but a subject, capable of saying "I," and able to transcend, or go beyond, the limits of the nature it possesses. The humanity assumed by the Logos was fully human, and even more perfectly human than our humanity, because the Logos was the very model according to which we were created: the fact that there was no human hypostasis—or a distinct human "I" (the Nestorian solution)—in Jesus did not make him less perfectly human. Rather his hypostasis, because it was divine, enhanced humanity, which is, in Christ, the humanity of God. The same philosophy of hypostasis applied to created humanity makes deification understandable as always a personal, or hypostatic, possibility for each human being when he or she transcends natural limitations and communes in divine life.

Moving away from legalism and emphasizing personal communion as the content of salvation is, as we have seen, the main trend in contemporary Orthodox theology. In this approach there may be a certain danger of subjectivism, unless one remains fully consistent with patristic christology and also a sound theology of baptism.<sup>53</sup>

51 *Opusc.* 6 (PD 91, 68D); on this point see the commentary by F. M. L  thel, *Th  ologie de l'agonie du Christ* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1979), pp. 87-90, with French translation of the crucially important *Opusculum* 6 of Maximus.

52 Maximus, *Ep.* 12 (PG 91, 489BC) etc.; John of Damascus, *De natura composita contra acephalos* (PG 95, 113D).

53 The heresy of "Messalianism" has been a permanent temptation for Eastern Christian monasti-

If death is the ultimate, cosmic enemy, Christ is the Savior because he conquers death. His death on the cross is a historical fact, sealed by the resurrection. Having identified himself with fallen humanity down to death on the cross, he rose again and manifested the risen, transfigured, and deified humanity which was from the beginning in the plan of God. That new humanity becomes also ours when we are baptized and share in the eucharist, which is a communion with the risen Lord: "You have died," writes the Apostle, "and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). Baptism and eucharist are, therefore, the true foundations not only of spirituality but also of Christian ethics. Through them each human person can share in the risen humanity of Christ and achieve a communal unity, which is the Church, Body of Christ. And since Christ's humanity is hypostatically united with the divine Logos, "life in Christ" can also be termed deification.<sup>54</sup>

Although the christological dimension of "new humanity" is the necessary starting point of soteriology, the role of the Holy Spirit is central precisely to the personalistic and freedom-oriented Orthodox understanding of salvation.<sup>55</sup>

The Fathers—particularly St Gregory of Nazianzus and Pseudo-Macarius—often define theocentric anthropology in terms of an efflux of the Spirit in the human being, making him different from other creatures.<sup>56</sup> This affinity with God through the Spirit is what explains man's openness upwards, and also his freedom. Hence the Spirit is active wherever humanity exercises this God-given freedom—e.g., as Mary pronounces her "yes" to the divine will (Lk 1:38), as Jesus through his human

cism since the fourth century and until the late Middle Ages. One of its most distinctive traits was to conceive deification as a purely subjective result of prayer, independent of baptism. This criterion allowed the recent tendency to rehabilitate the author known as Ps.-Macarius from the accusation of being a "Messalian"; cf. H. D  rries, *Die Theologie des Makarios/Symeon* (G  ttingen: Vandenhoeck, Ruprecht, 1978). This rehabilitation is important in view of the great (and fully justified) popularity of the Macarian writings in the Orthodox spiritual tradition.

54 In the christology shaped by Maximus the Confessor and later by Gregory Palamas, the hypostatic union of two natures in Christ implies a *communicatio idiomatum*: the divine "energies" penetrate and "deify" the risen humanity of Christ (without a mixture of "essences" or "natures"), as well as the humanity of those who are "in Christ"; cf. Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought*, pp. 170-71, 188-89; *A Study of Gregory Palamas* (2nd ed.; Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), pp. 157-84.

55 "The Theology of the Holy Spirit," in J. Meyendorff, *Catholicity and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1983), p. 15-29.

56 Cf. Gregory of Naz., *Poems* (PG 37, 452).

will accepts the messianic ministry at the river Jordan, and as any human being is baptized "in water and the Spirit." Christian revelation and Christian theology are somewhat apophatic in their references to the Spirit. Indeed, the Spirit was not incarnate, and his person, or *hypostasis*, remains hidden, except in its role of manifesting Christ, in perfecting his work in opening divine life in Christ to the free choice of each human person.

### *Conclusion: Ethics of the Resurrection*

If it is true to say, as we pointed out earlier, that human existence in this fallen world is dominated by mortality (and therefore by a struggle for survival, creating both a dependence upon means of sustenance and conflicts for possession of such means), the resurrection and the possibility of sharing in Christ's glorification and immortality change conditions radically. The awareness that this is indeed the case explains why, for early Christians, the resurrection was the *contents* of the "good news." "If Christ has not been raised," writes St Paul, "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15:17), because a mortal human being cannot give up his struggle for survival and is therefore necessarily a sinner. Through immortality, however, he can be truly free.

Here lies, it seems, the right approach to ethics, as it is found in the New Testament, which can easily be explained away as unrealistic paraphrases unless one takes seriously the idea that the teachings of Jesus are addressed to those who are free from death and from the struggle for survival. Indeed, such precepts as "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink...Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap...Consider the lilies of the field..." (Mt 7:25-30) sound like sentimental or emotional exhortations only, unless they reflect a real experience of victory over death, which liberates Christians from the most common dependence upon food (or money) and enables them to "give," rather than being concerned about "receiving" (cf. Acts 20:35). Redemption is not only a negative remission of sins but also and primarily a new freedom for the Children of God in the communion of the new Adam.

## 10

### The Christian Gospel and Social Responsibility<sup>1</sup>

If the Christian East has any established reputation, it consists in its purported detachment from historical realities, its concern with "mysticism," its one-sided dedication to liturgical contemplation of eternal truths, and its forgetfulness of the concrete needs of human society, as such. The issue is of some importance, because Western Christians, in the midst of their own activist and society-oriented concerns, often have their own minds so well set on this reputation of Eastern Christianity that meaningful cross-fertilization becomes impossible. If the study of history can help destroy prejudice, it can certainly be of use in this instance, not only for theologians engaged in ecumenism, but also for all those interested in religious experience. Indeed, the very notions of "Christian East" and "Christian West" have now a merely historical significance: the ideas which for centuries have distinguished East and West, as they were geographically, culturally and politically separated, could now become (and indeed have become already) a common inheritance. There are today many Westerners who are "Eastern" Orthodox Christians, and modern Western culture itself is unthinkable without the impact of a Dostoevsky. On the other hand, indelibly Western religious phenomena, such as the million-strong Baptist movement in Russia, are prominent in the "East," not to speak of Marxism itself, which was conceived in industrial England but found its radical application in Eastern Europe and, more recently, in the Far East.

Our time, therefore, is a time of confrontations and options. Ideas and values, detached from their historical background, are to be accepted or rejected on the basis of their intrinsic worth. But then the study and

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in F. Forrester Church and Timothy George, eds., *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History*. Essays presented to George H. Williams on the occasion of his 65th birthday (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979), pp. 118-32. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

understanding of their historical background becomes an even more responsible task. Distinguishing between the permanent and the occasional is particularly indispensable to Orthodox theologians involved in the necessary task of clarifying what is Tradition—the inner consistency of ideas and actions expressed in history with the one apostolic faith—and what are the human “traditions,” which reflect the legitimate variety of historical process and, at times, are in conflict with the unchanging and unchangeable content of the Gospel itself.

The value of the various human “traditions” can be established only on the basis of a faith which gives meaning to history and provides it with a goal, an *eschaton*. Christian initiatives in the life of society are not blind initiatives: they are based on knowledge of what can ultimately *be expected* as the end of human history, and what cannot. Similarly, it is the same *expectation* which provides them with a basis for selection among the initiatives taken by others.

Our discussion of historical developments in the past of Eastern Christianity must therefore start with a definition of eschatological categories.

### *Three Eschatologies*

Christianity always rejected the ontological dualism of the Manicheans, and also the idea—common in the Gnosticism of the second century—that visible creation is the work of an inferior Demiurge, distinct from the Transcendent God; instead it affirms the basic goodness of creation, “both visible and invisible.” With equal consistency, however, the New Testament maintains an existential dualism between “this world,” which is in a state of rebellion against God, and “the world to come,” when God will be “all in all.” Christians expect “the city to come” and consider themselves to be only “sojourners,” rather than full-fledged citizens, in the present world. However, this New Testament eschatology and its practical implications have been lived and understood differently by Christians at different times in history.

1) The idea that the “Kingdom” will come suddenly, through a single-handed divine *fiat*, in a not-so-distant future was widespread in the early Christian communities. This eschatological conception in effect implied that Christians would constantly pray that “the figure of this world may

pass away.” They would not be concerned at all with the betterment of society, simply because earthly society was destined to an early and catastrophic disappearance. They would consider as unavoidable the ultimate condemnation of the vast majority of mankind and the salvation of only a few. In this perspective even the smallest cell of earthly society, the family, would become a burden; and marriage, though permitted, would not be recommended. The eschatological prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus!” would be understood primarily as the cry of the “remnant,” totally helpless in a hostile world and seeking salvation *from* it, not a responsibility *towards* it.

Such an eschatology provides no basis for any Christian mission to society or culture. It attributes to God alone, acting without any human cooperation, the task of bringing about a New Jerusalem, which would come down ready-made from heaven. It also forgets those New Testament images of the Kingdom which precisely imply cooperation or “synergy”: the mustard seed, which grows into a big tree, the yeast which leavens the whole dough, the fields ready for the harvest. An eschatology of withdrawal is, of course, psychologically understandable and even spiritually justified in times when the Christian community is forced to return to itself through external pressure and persecution, as in the first centuries and in more recent times as well; but if transformed into a system, it clearly betrays the biblical message taken as a whole. The “New Jerusalem” is not only a free gift of God coming from heaven, but also the seal and the fulfillment of all the legitimate efforts and aspirations of mankind, transfigured and transformed into a new creation.

2) The emphasis on human achievement leads to another and opposite extreme: a pelagianizing and optimistic eschatology based on a belief in the never-ending progress of human society. In strongly maintaining that human history has a meaning and a goal, this belief in progress—in its capitalistic or Marxist forms—is a post-Christian phenomenon. It is still technically an “eschatology” and has inspired much of modern European and American culture during the past three centuries. In the past decade many Christians have also more or less adopted this eschatology. They identify social progress with “new creation,” accepting “history” as a guide towards the “New Jerusalem,” and defining the primary Christian task in “secular” categories.

This second eschatology, whether or not it calls itself Christian, takes no account of sin and death, from which mankind cannot be redeemed through its own efforts; and thus it ignores the most real and the most tragic aspect of human existence. It seems to aspire after an unending civilization, ever imprisoned by death, which in fact would be "as horrible as immortality for a man who is prisoner of sickness and old age."<sup>2</sup> By accepting historical determinism, it renounces the very center of the Christian message: *liberation* from "the powers and principalities" of history through Christ's resurrection and through the prophetic promise of a cosmic transfiguration brought by God, not by man.

3) The biblical concept of "prophecy" leads us to a third form of eschatology which does justice both to God's power and to man's freedom and responsibility. Prophecy, both in the Old Testament and the New, is neither a simple foretelling of the future nor a declaration of inevitability. It is "either a promise or a menace."<sup>3</sup> In other words, as the Russian religious philosopher Fedotov rightly points out, it is always *conditional*. The "good things" of the future are a promise to the *faithful*, while cataclysms are a menace to the *sinners*. Both, however, are ultimately conditioned by man's freedom. God would refrain from destroying Sodom for the sake of ten faithful, and when the Ninevites repented, he pardoned Nineveh, sparing it from the doom promised by Jonah.

For God is not bound by any natural or historical necessity. Man himself, in his freedom, is to decide whether the coming of Jesus will be a frightful judgment or a joyous marriage feast. No eschatology will be faithful to the Christian message unless it maintains both the power of God over history and the task of man, which resides in the very real freedom which was restored to him in Jesus Christ, for the building of the Kingdom of God.

These are the initial considerations which will provide us with a point of reference in viewing and evaluating facts of the past.

### *The Legacy of Byzantium*

Rome and its imperial tradition exercised an indelible influence, both in

2 G. P. Fedotov, *Novyi Grad* (New York, 1952), p. 323.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 327.

the West and in the East, on the way Christians approached all issues involving society and culture. The Christian Church condemned apocalyptic Montanism, with its preaching of withdrawal from history and its negation of culture; but it welcomed the opportunity offered to it by the conversion of Constantine, and in the East even counted him among the saints, "equal to the apostles." This was a clear option taken in favor of assuming responsibility for the whole of the "inhabited earth" (οἰκουμένη). This world was to be influenced not only directly through word and sacrament, but also indirectly through the means which were at the disposal of the state: legislation, administration, and even (more questionably) military force, since all wars waged against the infidels were now seen as holy wars.

There are innumerable legislative texts which illustrate the fact that the Christian empire, without any formal objection on the part of the Church, considered the emperor as a direct appointee of God to rule and protect society. "It is in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," writes Emperor Justinian (527-565),

that we always start every undertaking and action. For from him we received full charge of the empire; by him, we concluded a permanent peace with the Persians; through him we have dethroned the fiercest and strongest tyrants; through him, we have overcome numberless difficulties; by him it has been given to us to defend Africa and reduce it under our power; by him, to govern (the state) wisely and keep it strongly under our sway...Hence we place our life under his Providence and prepare to organize our armed troops and our officers..."<sup>4</sup>

As is well known, the tradition of christianized autocracy produced different historical forms in the West and in the East. The West experienced the fall of Rome in the fifth century; and after the ephemeral attempts of Carolingians and Ottonians to assume the old Roman imperial power, and after the epic struggles by popes to ensure the Church's independence, the *Roman pontiff* was finally recognized as a legitimate successor of the Caesars, acknowledged both as the religious and the political leader of Christendom. By contrast, in the East the original empire lasted until 1453. But if this is so, are historians right in assuming that the system of government accepted by the Byzantine state and church was a form of "caesaropapism?" This is a serious contention. If it were

4 *Codex Just.* I, 27, 2.



true, it would imply that in the medieval period the Orthodox Church did in fact capitulate to the "secular," i.e., did accept the second type of eschatology which sees the Kingdom of God as fully "continuous" with secular history. In that case Orthodox theology today would be inconsistent with its own past in criticizing "secularism."

It would certainly be impossible to present here a full historical discussion of the problem of church and society in Byzantium, and I will limit myself to a few brief statements, which could easily be backed with texts and facts.

1) *Byzantine Christianity never accepted the belief that the emperor had absolute authority in matters of faith or ethics.*<sup>5</sup> It could not accept such a belief for the simple and general reasons that it never was a religion of authority. The ever-recurring theological controversies continued before and frequently after the meeting of councils called by the emperors to settle them (cf. the triadological controversies after Nicea; the christological controversies after Ephesus and Chalcedon, etc.). Imperial edicts did not stop them. At the time of the Palaeologan dynasty (1261-1453), each successive emperor was actively pushing the church towards union with Rome. The union, however, failed to take place.

2) *It is not by opposing to the emperors another competing authority (i.e., that of the priesthood) that Byzantine society avoided caesaropapism, but by referring all authority directly to God.* This theocentric view of the universe and of the Church is well expressed in the classic text on the subject, the Sixth Novella of Justinian:

The greatest blessings of mankind are the gifts of God which have been granted us by the mercy on high—the priesthood and the imperial authority. The priesthood ministers to things divine: the imperial authority is set over, and shows diligence in things human; but both proceed from one and the same source, and both adorn the life of man.<sup>6</sup>

In the West, this famous text provoked an *institutional* struggle between two legally defined powers, the *sacerdotium* and the *Imperium*; but

<sup>5</sup> I discuss this point at length in my study of "Justinian, the Empire and the Church," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22 (1968), pp. 45-60.

<sup>6</sup> English tr. in E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 75-76. In spite of the obvious meaning of this solemn text, the idea that Byzantine emperors attributed to themselves the priestly dignity appears in authoritative publications today. Cf. Walter Ullmann, *Medieval Political Thought* (London, 1975), pp. 33-34.

in Byzantium it was understood in a *christological* context. In Christ, the two natures are united, without separation or confusion, into one single *hypostasis*, or person, who is the unique source of their united (though distinct) existence. The adoption of this christological model as a pattern for the organization of society illustrates quite well the contrast between the legally-minded West and the eschatologically oriented East.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, according to Justinian, the common aim of the empire and the priesthood is "a happy concord (*ἀρμονία*) which will bring forth all good things for mankind," clearly an eschatological goal actually indefinable in legal, political, or social terms.

Of course, Byzantine Christians were aware of the fact that all humans—emperors, patriarchs, priests—would inevitably be in some way unfaithful to the Christian ideal set before them, and thus they never ascribed infallibility to any individual, nor even to any legally defined institution. This is precisely why the history of the Byzantine Church offers innumerable examples of highly authoritative voices challenging the arbitrary actions either of emperors or of ecclesiastical authorities. The examples of St John Chrysostom, St Maximus the Confessor, St John of Damascus, and St Theodore of Studios are well-known. They cannot be considered as exceptions to the rule, because their writings have been widely read by generations of Byzantine Christians and were always among the most authoritative patterns of social behavior in the Christian East. None of them, however, challenged either the political system or the eschatological ideal defined by Justinian. None of them denied the principle that "divine" and "human" things are inseparable since the incarnation, and must become "christ-like,"—i.e., the "human" must live in "harmony" with the divine. None of them preached either an apocalyptic withdrawal from culture or a separation between the spiritual and the secular which would give "autonomy" to the latter.

How did this ideal manifest itself in practice? There is no doubt that Byzantine society, like medieval Western society, made continuous efforts to integrate Christian principles into its legislative texts and its daily practice. This applies to both the state and the church. "We believe that there is nothing higher and greater that we can do," wrote the emperor Leo

<sup>7</sup> On the consequences, see F. Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* II. *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 9 (Washington, D.C., 1966).

III in his *Eclogia*, "than to govern in judgment and justice those who are committed (by God) to our care, to the end that the bonds of all manner of injustice may be loosened, the oppression imposed by force may be set at naught, and the assaults of wrongdoers may be repelled."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the church was required, by its canon law, to use its wealth in building and administering institutions of social welfare.<sup>9</sup> The extent to which both the state and the church practiced social welfare is wider than one usually imagines,<sup>10</sup> even if the negative institutions inherited from pagan antiquity such as slavery, were only humanized without being fully suppressed.

The overall concern for the *humanum* implied no clear distinction of jurisdiction between the state and the church; unity of purpose was the very content of the ideal of "harmony" defined by Justinian. This unity of purpose justified the concern and the power of the emperor to administer practical church affairs (choice of patriarchs, convocation of councils, definition of limits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, etc.) as well as the participation of church officials in political responsibility. Certainly the canon law of the church forbade both the appointment of clerics by civil authority (II Nicea, canon 3) and the assumption of any secular dignity by clerics (Chalcedon, canon 7). But these canons never served as a guarantee against abuses. On the other hand, the church never considered it an abuse to ensure continuity of the Justinianic "harmony" by buttressing the state in times of need. Thus the "ecumenical patriarch" of Constantinople was, in fact, a political official of the empire, the guarantor of imperial legitimacy; and he would automatically assume the regency of the state when the need for this arose. The roles played either as regents or political leaders by patriarchs Sergius I (610-638), Nicholas Mysticus (901-907, 912-925), Arsenius Autoreianus (1255-1259, 1261-1265), and John Calecas (1334-1347) are examples of this. The typically Byzantine notion of the inseparable union between a universal church and an ideally universal empire was also expressed in the very last days of Byzantium. Patriarch Anthony (1389-1390, 1391-1397) was asked by the Great Prince of Moscow, Basil, I, whether the commemoration of the Byzantine emperor's name could be dropped at liturgical services in

8 Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

9 See for example, canons 8 and 10 of the Council of Chalcedon.

10 See D. J. Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1968).

Russia. "My son," the patriarch answered, "you are wrong in saying: We have a church but no emperor. It is not possible for Christians to have a church and not to have an empire. Church and empire have a great unity and community; nor is it possible for them to be separated from one another."<sup>11</sup>

The Slavs, spiritual children of Byzantium, certainly learned the lesson. The Byzantine pattern of relations between church and society was faithfully adopted by them with the same ideal of a "harmonious" union in a common allegiance to Christ. Creating their little "Byzantiums" in Preslav, in Ohrid, in Trnovo, in Kiev and in Moscow, Slavic tsars and princes recognized the church as their cultural inspiration and guide; and the church assumed this role willingly, translating Byzantine texts into the vernacular and assuming social and political responsibility whenever the need arose. Thus St Alexis of Moscow became for a time regent of Muscovite Russia (1353-1378), and his example was later followed by Patriarch Filaret (1619-1634). Even the great St Sergius of Radonezh used his spiritual prestige against the factional feuds of Russian princes.

What then is the legacy of Byzantium to the contemporary Orthodox Church? Theologically, it is primarily in the affirmation that just as man, individually, is destined to "deification" and is fully himself when he is in communion with God—a communion which was realized by Jesus Christ, and in him made accessible to all in the faith—so human society is called to conform itself to God's presence and become the Kingdom of God. The ambiguity of the Byzantine experiment resided, however, on the level of eschatology. Could the Justinianic "harmony," an eschatological ideal, be realized concretely in history? Was Byzantium so fully transformed and transfigured as a society that it found itself in full conformity with God's plan, or was it still a "fallen" society, under the power of evil, sin, and death?

The Byzantine Empire, as a political and cultural entity, never resolved this ambiguity of its claims. The church, however, always maintained the *distinction* between the priesthood and the empire, between the liturgical, sacramental, and eucharistic anticipation of the Kingdom on the one hand and the empirical life of still-fallen humanity on the other. This polarity between the "already now" and the "not yet" was also constantly

11 Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

proclaimed in the large and prosperous Byzantine monastic movement, whose withdrawal from society and non-conformity to the standards imposed by the empire served constantly as a prophetic reminder that there *cannot* be total "harmony" before the *parousia*, that the Roman Empire is not yet the Kingdom of God, that in order to share in Christ's victory over the world Christians must themselves challenge the laws and the logics of fallen humanity.

### *Modern Times*

The survival of Eastern Orthodox Christianity after the fall of Byzantium and of the other Christian empires effectively proves that Orthodox Christians did not believe in the empire as a fully "realized eschatology," but rather—as the monks have always maintained—they discovered the Kingdom in the eucharist and in the personal experience of God, accessible to the members of Christ's body.

History itself forced them into recognizing the "other-worldliness" of Christianity, since the "world" had suddenly become hostile again.

The Ottoman Empire, which during four centuries held under its sway the Balkans, Asia Minor, and the Middle East (much of the former Byzantine territories), was a Moslem state which tolerated the existence of a large Christian population but forbade all Christian mission and made any cultural or intellectual development practically impossible. During all these centuries, the Byzantine liturgy, with its rich hymnography, its explicit eschatological character, and its ability to unite the congregation into a real experience of the body of Christ, became the principal and largely self-sufficient expression of Christianity. Also, following the Byzantine tradition mentioned above, which implied that the patriarch of Constantinople would assume responsibility for society as a whole in the absence of the emperor, the ecumenical patriarch became the *ethnarch*, or civil and religious head of the entire Orthodox Christian population of the Turkish realm by investiture of the Sultan. Thus, while the church did not actually renounce its mission to society, this mission in practice became limited by the boundaries of a ghetto. This situation, enforced by the tragedy of history, was unfortunately to remain as a habit even when times again became more favorable to mission.

Meanwhile, in Russia a new and powerful Orthodox empire had taken shape and seemed originally destined to assume the role of a second Byzantium or, if one wishes, a "Third Rome." However, the political and social ideas which eventually prevailed in Russia were those of a Western secular state, with Byzantine formulae used mainly to justify autocratic power as such. The ecclesial and canonical corrective which had been acknowledged in Byzantium was lacking. It is in Russia, however, at a time when the empire had not yet taken its final turn towards secular ideals, that a significant theological controversy took place precisely on the social role of the church. The controversy opposed "Possessors" and "Non-Possessors," two monastic and ecclesiastical groups equally devoted to the idea of a relevant Christian witness.<sup>12</sup>

The "Possessors," led by St Joseph of Volotsk (1440-1515) found themselves in the tradition of Byzantine theocratic society. They defended the right of the church, and particularly of the monasteries, to possess great wealth, which was to be used for social action: hospitals, schools, and various forms of welfare. This social witness was seen by them as essential to the very nature of Christianity. They were not afraid of the spiritual vulnerability of a rich church, whose wealth could be used by an inimical state to blackmail it. They believed in the future of a "holy Russia," whose benevolent tsars would support the church's prosperity and whose ecclesiastical leadership would be forever immune from the temptations of bourgeois comfort, using its wealth only for good works.

The "Non-Possessors," meanwhile, considered that wealth inevitably corrupts, especially that form of wealth which was enjoyed by medieval monasteries: serfs working on immense domains. They saw the mission of the church primarily as a prophetic witness, pointing to the Kingdom to come. St Nilus of Sora (1433-1508), the leader of the "Non-Possessors," inherited the ideals of hesychasm, the mystical and contemplative monasticism of the early church. He did not trust, as his opponents did, the future of a "holy Russia." He foresaw its secularization and defended the full independence of the church from the state.

The controversy ended with the victory of the "Possessors." But the

<sup>12</sup> For a brilliant analysis of the controversy see G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind II* (Cambridge, MA, 1962)

"Non-Possessors" were to be largely vindicated by later historical developments. At the time of the secular Enlightenment the Russian Church was deprived of its lands by Peter the Great and Catherine II. It had no means left for a meaningful social witness. Meanwhile, the spiritual heirs of St Nilus of Sora—St Tikhon of Zadonsk (1724-1783), St Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833), the *startsy* of Optino—became the most authentic witnesses to Christian experience in the midst of secular society and succeeded in building bridges between traditional Orthodoxy and the religious revival of the *intelligentsia* in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.

The past two centuries have witnessed tremendous historical changes in the life of the Orthodox Church. The Ottoman Empire disintegrated; and out of this disintegration new nations, whose religious past is rooted in Orthodoxy, were born. Orthodox Russia, after some very hopeful signs of spiritual revival, became the Soviet Union. Millions of Orthodox Christians were dispersed throughout the Western world, where the general frame of reference used in solving "social issues" is determined by Western religious history.

In the midst of this confusion, it was inevitable that the traditional Orthodox values would be severely tested. The new nations in the Balkans, whose cultural identity the Orthodox Church had maintained for centuries of Turkish yoke, had gained their political independence in an atmosphere of secularized Romanticism, which was itself a fruit of the French Revolution. The *nation* itself, not the Christian eschatological and christological ideas, came to be seen as the supreme goal of social action. The church was frequently unable either to cope with the situation or to discern the spiritual issues at stake. The hierarchs, whose traditional role as "ethnarchs" placed them originally at the forefront of the liberation struggle, soon accepted the comfortable position of obedient civil servants in states led by secularized politicians. Mistaking the new situation for a return to Byzantine theocracy, they identified the interests of the church with that of secular nationalism. The church condemned this identification in an official conciliar statement (1872), labeling it as the heresy of "phyletism." But the temptation of religious nationalism remains one of the most basic weaknesses of contemporary Orthodoxy. In fact, it represents a capitulation before a subtle form of secularism, which Byzantium with its universal idea of the empire always avoided.

In Orthodox circles today concern for a social witness of Orthodoxy is frequently voiced. Between the two World Wars, and also after World War II, a remarkable revival of Christian social activism took place in Greece. It achieved significant results in the field of evangelism but was later criticized—with some justification—for its pietistic and Protestant-inspired orientation. Meanwhile, on the intellectual level, the Orthodox Church attracted to its fold prominent Russian political economists who had previously been Marxists. This pleiad of "religious philosophers," including S. N. Bulgakov, N. S. Berdiaev, S. L. Frank, P. B. Struve and others, began to exercise its influence in the church itself; and some of them played an important role in church affairs just prior to the Revolution. Even if some of them, under the influence of an optimistic Hegelianism, adopted a monistic and static philosophy of the universe, usually known as "sophiology" and not unlike the systems of Tillich or Teilhard, their move "from Marxism to Idealism" is a significant event in the history of Orthodox thought. It still fascinates those involved in the nascent religious thought among Soviet intellectual dissidents today.

What attracted these people back to Orthodoxy? Primarily its eschatological expectation of a transfigured universe; its belief in "deification" as the ultimate destiny of man; its ability, in its liturgical life and in the spiritual experience of its saints, to anticipate the vision of the second coming. They were drawn to Orthodoxy's ability to maintain a "realized" and not only a futuristic eschatology; to speak of the Kingdom of God not only in terms of concepts or practical achievements, but also as a real vision of the divine presence. These are the aspects of the Orthodox tradition which make it a living hope not only to intellectuals disappointed in Marxist totalitarian socialism, but also to those of us whose destiny is to witness to Orthodoxy in the West.

### *Conclusion*

Christian tradition cannot be evaluated only in terms of its "successes" and its "failures." As we all know, the New Testament itself does not offer promises of earthly success to the followers of Jesus. Indeed, this must be so, because the true power of Christ will be manifested to the world only on the *last day*, while the *present* power of the Kingdom is fully revealed only to the eyes of faith. Our brief review of the Orthodox tradition is

certainly not a success story; we have only attempted to suggest the main orientations of Orthodox thought and action *historically*. How these historical facts can find their place in a contemporary doctrinal statement must be left to another occasion.

However, a preliminary conclusion can already be drawn: that a Christian solution of social issues is never either absolute or perfect as long as the *parousia* has not taken place, and that a Christian can live with that imperfection because he knows that the *parousia* will eventually come; but he cannot be reconciled with imperfections as such. The Orthodox Church has condemned the eschatology of "withdrawal," which would justify indifference and inaction. But—and this is particularly important for present dialogues—it will certainly never agree that the Kingdom of God, present in the Church as Mystery and as an anticipated eschatological reality, is dependent upon the influence which its members may or may not exercise in secular society. Orthodoxy will always maintain that the starting point, the source, and the criterion for solving social issues are found in the uninterrupted, mysterious, and in a sense transcendent communion of the eucharistic gathering.

Historically, Orthodox Christians frequently looked for substitutes for this initial and basic criterion. The Byzantine Empire provided one; nationalism later presented another. But these historical and spiritual mistakes were ultimately recognized as such. They should not, in any case, justify similar substitutions today.

## 11

## Visions of the Church: Russian Theological Thought in Modern Times<sup>1</sup>

In 988 A.D., the Orthodox Christian faith, as it was shaped in the Eastern Roman empire centered in Constantinople (or Byzantium), became the officially-established religion of the principality of Kiev. Since that time, the Orthodox Church has remained as essential factor in the cultural identity of the Russians, and principal source of a consistent world-view. In the history of the country, these thousand years have been marked by four major foreign invasions—the Mongolian (1238-40), the Polish (1610-12), the French (1812) and the German (1941-44)—each of which had different but important religious repercussions. There were in addition several major internal crises, also inseparable from the religious history of the country: the splitting of ancient Russia into the "Great Russian" (under the Mongols, then under the Muscovite empire and the "Ukrainian" (under Poland) nationalities; the liquidation of the feudal aristocracy by Ivan IV (1533-84); the radical Westernizing reforms of Peter I (1682-1725); and in our own century, the October Revolution (1917). There was also a crisis of a principally religious nature (although inseparable from cultural and political factors): the schism of the "Old Believers," finalized in 1666-7.

Several of these events, particularly the internal ones, effected changes which would be considered as inevitable in terms of the historical evolution of the country from the Middle Ages to modernity, but—for the most part—they unleashed a formidable amount of unnecessary brutality and bloodshed. Not that Russian history was really bloodier than that of the rest of Europe (it is sufficient to recall here the reigns of Henry VIII in England, Louis XI in France, the religious wars, and the "terror" of the French Revolution); but there was something different in the more personal and sudden character of the successive cultural upheavals in Russia:

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in German, J. Meyendorff, "Visionen von der Kirche," *Ökumenische Rundschau* 32, 2 (1988), pp. 154-162. English translation published in *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 34 (1990), pp. 5-14.



hence their dramatic and spectacular character. In the light of those events, the survival and repeated revivals of the church is all the more remarkable.

Modern Russian Orthodoxy and modern Russian theology cannot be understood without referring first to the reforms of Peter the Great and their impact upon the church. Deliberately breaking with the Byzantine past—which he hated in a very personal way—Peter suppressed the patriarchate of Moscow and placed the church under the administration of a state committee of clerics, appointed by him, and called “the Holy Synod.” In this he was consciously and meticulously following a model found in the Protestant states of Western Europe (1720-1). What remained untouched was the regional diocesan structure of the church and its liturgical life. In terms of intellectual development Peter imposed a system of schools where members of the clergy, now transformed into a hereditary caste, were called to study. Movement of personnel between the castes (e.g., from the gentry to the clergy) became practically impossible. The school system was adopted from the West and staffed with Westernized Ukrainian graduates from Kiev (recently annexed from Poland). Instruction was given in Latin, and *curricula* were mostly those of the Counter-Reformation, according to programs established by Polish Jesuits. A Protestant model for church government and a Latin theology in schools constituted together one of the paradoxes of a system, which was only gradually modified in the nineteenth century, but in some ways survived until 1917.

The oddities of the reforms did not, however, prevent the church from maintaining its role as the cultural backbone of the people. Only the higher classes gradually lost their conscious commitment to Orthodox Christianity. But missions continued among the indigenous peoples of Asia and “Russian America” (Alaska). The monastic tradition—somewhat weakened originally by the strict limitations and controls imposed upon it by Peter—produced its best fruits in the nineteenth century and began a Christian “reconquest” of the intelligentsia. The odd, Latin-oriented school system developed into updated theological academies (i.e., graduate schools) and seminaries. Innocent Veniaminov, a famous Russian missionary to Alaska, could hold conversations in Latin with Spanish missionaries in California, and it is in the same language that Archbishop

Maclagan of York conversed with Russian bishops and theologians as he visited Russia (1897). Historical studies developed so well that Adolf Harnack made a point of studying the Russian language only to be able to read the scholarly study by N. N. Glubokovsky on Theodorët of Cyrus. Perhaps, in some respects, relations between East and West would be easier today if Harnack’s linguistic zeal had been more widely imitated...

### *Philosophical Awakenings and Lay Theology*

German philosophy was taught at both universities and ecclesiastical academies, especially after reforms of the educational system in 1803-4. But the real philosophical awakening occurred spontaneously in intellectual circles, primarily in Moscow, where young men—many of whom were going to study at German universities—were looking for a world-view which would transcend empiricism and go beyond the practical and somehow simplistic practical reformism and Westernization inherited from the age of Peter the Great. Mystical and esoteric trends, popular at the court of Tsar Alexander I (1801-25), contributed to the atmosphere of spiritual anguish, as did the general Romantic movement in literature and social thought. The influence of the early Schelling became dominant among many intellectuals: his philosophy of art, in particular, was appealing to young Russians as a better way to perceive “absolute” reality.

Culturally detached from traditional Orthodox piety, both the “mysticism” of the imperial court and the “Schellingianism” of the intellectual circles were dominated by idealist religious problematics—a vague and philosophical religiosity, understood as superior to the dry dogmatic affirmations of the Orthodox catechism, or the “blind” faith of the peasant masses. This began to change in the 1840’s with the increasing influence of Hegelianism. As in Germany, Hegelians in Russia became divided on the issue of religion. Some rejected any form of “theology” and projected their atheism upon their social analysis. In 1847, Belinsky wrote to Gogol: “The Russian people is profoundly atheistic...” Others adopted another approach. The trend known as “Slavophilism,” opposed to the so-called “Westernizers,” emerged as a movement, which attempted a reconciliation between Hegelian philosophy and Orthodox Christianity.

Russian thought could not be and was not a simple clone of German

idealism. Ideas coming from Germany were used to shape an intense debate among Russians on the historical role and destiny of their country. The debate was spurred by the victory over Napoleon (1812) and encouraged further by Karamzin (1816-29). "Westernizers" like Chaadaev (1794-1856) denied that the Russian *past* made any contribution at all to world civilization, and affirmed that Russia could have a *future* only through integration into Western culture and Western Christianity. As a movement the "Slavophiles" stood, on the contrary, for the idea that the Russian past had value and that its most precious legacy was Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox "ethos." For this legacy, Russia was responsible in terms of the present and the future.

The obvious fact, which the Slavophiles had to face in order to defend their point of view, was that Orthodox Christianity had been preserved—in its liturgy, its traditions, and indeed, its beliefs—by the people, not by the state or the social elites. Since the reforms of Peter, the state and the elites were uprooted and divorced from the authentic realities of Russian life. Slavophilism implied a sharp criticism of contemporary social reality. It was expressed particularly by A. S. Khomiakov (1804-60), and was necessarily seen as rather subversive by the official government establishment, so that Khomiakov's writings were first published abroad, and in French. But on the other hand, Khomiakov found welcome support in a famous Encyclical Letter of the Eastern patriarchs (1848), published in response to the Encyclical *In suprema apostoli sede* of Pope Pius IX, and affirming that, in Orthodoxy, the responsible guardian of the true faith is not any visible head or institution, but "the people of God," i.e., the whole church, including clergy and laity. It is by signifying its "reception" of statements made by councils, or by any other authority, that the church is indeed faithful to the true apostolic tradition. Developed around the term *sobornost'* (coming from the Slavic translation of the adjective "catholic" in the credal definition of the church, and meaning also "conciliar"), Khomiakov's thought emphasized that church tradition is preserved not by juridically definable "authorities," but by the life of the church as a whole, within which all members are ultimately free and ultimately responsible for the integrity of the true faith.

Khomiakov was polemically bitter against "Western confessions." For him, the pope was "the first Protestant," because he had attempted to

impose his individual views as true, in opposition to the common, "conciliar" teachings of the whole church. His thought was eventually recognized very widely—especially his teaching about *sobornost'*—as an authentic voice of the Orthodox tradition.

In this context, it should be noted that anti-Western confessional polemics did not prevent Khomiakov from being open to Western theological trends. The influence upon him of J. A. Moehler's book, *Die Einheit der Kirche* (1825), is a case in point, and an indication that the religious ferment in Russia signaled the beginning of an authentic dialogue.

The merit of the Slavophiles was in their rediscovery of the church as a living body, and of what began to be called in Russian "the churchly mind" (*tserkovnost'*). Their positive influence resulted in a revival of religious practice among the educated classes: for many, it became again respectable to go to church, to understand the meaning of the liturgy, to participate in sacramental life and follow the discipline of the church calendar. However, the Slavophiles were also liable to criticism, particularly in their methodology. What was not always clear in their mind was the distinctions between "the people of God" (i.e., the church) and "the people" in general; between "church" and "society;" between the "community" (the New Testament *koinonia*) and the organization of land ownership (*zemstvo*). Their observation of the Russian peasant ethos and their theologizing were not always clearly distinct.

Actually, in the case of the *early* Slavophiles, this criticism applies only in a very limited way, to methodology rather than to substance. Being amateur theologians writing for a wide public, they sometimes lacked methodological accuracy. But there is no doubt, in Khomiakov's ecclesiological writings, that he saw clearly the difference between the Church of God, the temple of the Spirit, and the Russian peasant commune. His friend and disciple Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1850)—a conscious convert from "Schellingianism" to Orthodox Christianity, under the influence of his wife—would find inspiration at the famous monastery of Optino and in translating the Greek fathers. He would also discover, in his theory of knowledge, the notion of "personal communion" *between the knowers* as a "relational" condition for reaching the truth—an authentically Christian, biblical and patristic notion, essential for ecclesiology. An equally strong sense of the church appears in the writings of Iu. Samarin (1819-1876)

with his analysis of the Latin and Protestant temptations in the eighteenth century Russian Church, and his attempt at justifying the Orthodox alternative by using an "organic" Hegelian approach to history.

Only in its later history did Slavophilism inspire "Panslavism." A movement which began as a reaction against the secularization of society resulting from the Petrine reforms, it was adopted as official ideology by the state establishment, particularly during the reign of Alexander III (1881-94). It then acquired a nationalistic and political content which was foreign to its founders.

### "Sophiology": V. S. Soloviev and His Followers

During his relatively short life (1853-1900), V. S. Soloviev—another "lay theologian"—exercised more influence upon Russian minds than any other intellectual figure of his day. His writings included many elements, borrowed from numerous sources, which cannot all be listed here. He was an enthusiast of socialism in his younger days; a "pan-entheist" in Schelling's vein, and a follower of Schelling's teaching on the "soul of the world"; a poet and a visionary seeking an ultimate and unifying meaning to reality; an admirer of the early Christian gnostic systems (Valentinus) and of Origen's platonism; an exponent of romantic universalism, seeking a politico-religious union between the Roman Pope and the Russian Tsar. After facing some disappointment in the feasibility of such a plan, however, he resorted to an apocalyptic vision, where all Christians—Roman Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox—would unite in the face of the coming Antichrist. Behind all these rather disparate intuitions, Soloviev's thought is centered on the idea of "pan-unity" (*vseedinstvo*): God's own essence and the essence of the world are ultimately *one*. To describe this oneness—which, as was the case with Origen, obliterates substantially the biblical idea of creation of the world "from nothing," since God creates ultimately out of himself—Soloviev and his disciples use the image of *Wisdom (Sophia)*. In Soloviev, *Sophia* becomes a personalized, feminine and motherly divine reality: in her, he contemplates the ultimate source and meaning of all things, beyond the three divine persons themselves, and finds the metaphysical "Justification of Goodness" (*Opravdanie Dobra*, the title of one of his books), the basis of social and personal ethics.

Partly under the influence of the Slavophiles, Soloviev was interested in and committed to the church, but his system and his entire approach to religion was gnostic rather than traditionally Orthodox. His enthusiasm for Roman Catholicism, which marked only part of his life and made him look like a "Westernizer," is to be understood in the light of his philosophy of "pan-unity" and is not a great help in authentic ecumenism. His major achievement, however, is to have become the main spokesman of a religious reaction against the "secular" Hegelian and Marxist thought which still dominated much of the Russian intelligentsia by the end of the last century. There is no doubt that his thought and influence played an important role in the publication of a collection of articles, entitled "Signposts" (*Vekhi*), which signaled the conversion in 1909 of eminent Marxists to "Idealism," or in fact to Christianity. The group included men like N. Berdiaev, S. Bulgakov and P. Struve. In the years before the Revolution "religious philosophy," rather than Marxism, was the prevailing interest among the most eminent Russian intellectuals. A real reconciliation seemed to be taking place between the trend coming from the early Slavophiles and leading—sometimes through Dostoevsky—to Orthodox traditionalism, and the disciples of German Idealism, who were in the process of rejecting the Marxists variation of Hegelianism. More significantly still, the official system of theological education of the Orthodox Church was opening its doors to representatives of "lay theology."

In 1901-03, "religious and philosophical meetings," initiated by D. Merezhkovsky in St Petersburg, were presided over by Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky), rector of the Theological Academy and later patriarch (1943-4). The official journal of the Theological Academy of Moscow (*Bogoslovsky Vestnik*) was for several years edited by Father Paul Florensky, a major exponent of the "sophiological" school who had joined the Academy's faculty. After the Revolution, Florensky, while remaining a priest, made major contributions to science, technology, and energy production. Nevertheless, he was arrested and died in a concentration camp in 1937. His posthumous rehabilitation made possible the publication of his works. As a result, he has become an important symbol for contemporary intellectuals of the compatibility between science and religion.

### Conclusion: The Remaining Potential

One of the most negative consequences of the reforms of Peter I in the eighteenth century had been the divorce between the church—which was socially marginalized and placed under strict controls—and educated society, within which, particularly in the nineteenth century, intellectual and literary activities became dominated by religious issues. In the decades preceding the Revolution, a reconciliation was clearly in the making. It is this reconciliation which became largely responsible for the remarkable achievements of the first general council of the Russian Church, which had been prepared in 1905-7, and which met in Moscow during the hottest years of the Revolution (1917-19). The council was inspired by the idea of *sobornost'*. It included bishops, clergy and laity as voting members. Not only did it restore the patriarchate by electing to the position a very wise and holy man, Tikhon (Bellavin, d. 1925), but it defined procedures for the election of bishops by their diocese and the restoration of parish life. Many of these reforms became impractical with the establishment of the Soviet regime, but the inner, spiritual *aggiornamento* achieved at the council is certainly one of the elements which explains the survival of the church during the tragic years to follow.

In terms of theological development, the Revolution implied a practically total halt, so that all the potential of Russian theology was in danger of being lost. Even in the West there was rather limited knowledge of Russian theology, and its usefulness for dialogue was ignored. Actually, in those days the ecumenical movement was in its infancy. However, the role played after World War I by several émigré intellectuals—Nicholas A. Berdiaev, Serge N. Bulgakov, Georges V. Florovsky, and others—as spokesmen for Orthodoxy or for Russian “religious philosophy” was far from negligible. Today, after an imposed historical hiatus of several decades, Russian theology is slowly reemerging as a very significant factor on the ecumenical scene. There is, of course, much to be restored, or to be picked up at the point where things stood in 1918. The church, where very little *sobornost'* could be practiced in the past decades, has reacquired some of the bureaucratic stiffness which existed before the council of 1917-19. But the principles and ideas of the early Slavophiles remain pervasive. The Christian message of the great classical writers (Gogol, and particularly Dostoevsky) are incredibly influential. A sometimes exaggerated and romantic enthusiasm for the Russian

medieval tradition is widespread. Young Russian theologians rediscover and dream of emulating the scholarship shown in the old theological academies. There is a great diversity of approaches: some are greatly interested in the “sophiology” of the Soloviev school, others are (justifiably) critical of it in the name of the patristic tradition, represented by G. Florovsky. The absence of publications, and therefore of free debate and criticism, remains a major obstacle for the progress of theological thought; but the number of young and eager intellectuals is growing rapidly, although it is not always noticeable to outsiders, because as yet only a small minority of them appear on the international scene.

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